

## **A Person in Communion: The Witness of Mary, the Mother of God \***

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What shall we offer you, O Christ,  
Who for our sake appeared on earth as human?  
Every creature made by you offers you thanksgiving.  
The angels offer you a hymn,  
The heavens, a star,  
The magi, gifts,  
The shepherds, their wonder,  
The earth, its cave,  
The wilderness, a manger,  
And we offer to you, a Virgin Mother.<sup>1</sup>

### INTRODUCTION

The Orthodox approach theology as something much more than an academic discipline, valuable as this is. When conducted well, scholarly study and research serve true theology, as theology is ultimately concerned with the Triune God and our relationship with Him and with one another in the midst of creation. From this perspective, authentic theology is actually a vehicle for the Gospel dynamic which fully expresses the “life in Christ” (Rom 8:2).

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Despite the best of our human efforts, no formal study of theology can define God or fully contain the mystery that is the Triune God. Indeed, it is very possible to have projects labeled as 'theology' that distract the author and others from an authentic relationship with God. Sometimes these distractions are relatively minor. At other times, these distractions may seriously interfere with the Gospel message, often creating a 'false gospel' of their own. Constant vigilance is required in order to identify potential distractions in theological reflection. We are all accountable; no one in the study of theology is exempt. It is important to bear in mind that even the theologian's personal life and perspectives profoundly affect the conduct of doing theology and the theology that is produced. As St. Gregory the Theologian says, the great teachers of the faith theologized "in the manner of the apostles, not as Aristotle." <sup>2</sup>

This foundational perspective is very important. For the best of the Orthodox tradition, discerning authentic and healthy theology is not a mere speculative exercise. It is, rather, a matter of life and death, since theology serves as a vehicle through which the Author of Life makes Himself known. This is the gift of receiving the "life in abundance" (John 10:10) promised to us by our Lord and made present to us through the Holy Spirit who abides in the Church. Ultimately, through our theological reflection, we are concerned with speaking about the living God, in the presence of God. This is done both for the glory of God and for the salvation of all. The intimate connection between glorifying God and serving the salvation of all is expressed in the observation of St. Irenaeus of Lyons: "The glory of God is the human person fully live." <sup>3</sup>

The Orthodox have paid particular attention to the personal identity of the theologian. "The theologian is a person of prayer, a person of prayer is a theologian." This adage is attributed to the fourth-century mystic Evagrius of Pontus.

It reminds us that the true theologian is a person who is in a relationship with God, who has been tested through his or her life and has experienced communion with God. For the Christian East, communion with God has historically been referred to as *theosis*, or deification. Our life is meant to be a journey in which we grow closer to God through the relationships and responsibilities of this life. It is a journey that continues into the life to come.

With the above in mind, we may better appreciate the common Orthodox assumption that theology is to be prayed. Moreover, theology is best expressed in a doxological and pastoral manner. Through true praise, not only is one directed to the object of praise, but also one surrenders oneself in the presence of the object of praise. At the same time, what we say through our doxology is of vital importance. Through praise and thanksgiving, one does not define that which is essentially beyond human understanding. Definitions presume equality, or more accurately, superiority to the subject of our attention. Therefore, there is an inseparable and living relationship between dogma and devotion in the consciousness of the Church. It is impossible to separate theological truth from worship on the one hand and the needs of people on the other. The words of our theology are meant not only to praise God but also to nurture others in their growth in life and holiness.

Theology is a discipline that is more to be prayed and experienced than any other modality of expression. This is based upon the central affirmation rooted in the life of the early Church that "the word of prayer is the word of faith," "*lex orandi est lex credendi*." As we shall see, our appreciation of Mary, the Theotokos, is rooted in the worshiping life of the Church and is reflected in our own prayer. Bishop Kallistos Ware states that St. Mary "is the living heart of our piety." He also stresses that "our attitude is traditional, doxological and intuitive" regarding the Holy Virgin. <sup>4</sup> "Tradition" here

is generally understood as the life of the Holy Spirit in the Church. And the Orthodox affirm that it is through the life of the Church where our relationship with Mary and the saints is lived most fully.

### ESSENTIAL AFFIRMATIONS ABOUT MARY

The Orthodox Church uses a number of significant terms regarding Mary in its conciliar teachings and liturgical life. In the liturgical tradition, Mary is frequently referred to as: "Our all-holy, immaculate, most blessed and glorified Lady, the Mother of God, and ever-Virgin Mary." Of the many titles given to Mary, three affirmations are especially important. These will be discussed only briefly here.<sup>5</sup>

The first and most important is that she is the "Mother of God" or *Theotokos*. In a formal manner, this title comes to us from the Third Ecumenical Council held at Ephesus in 431. This term is an important consequence of some of the great Christological discussions that characterized this council and the period prior to it. Here is the key to our understanding of both this important term and the whole understanding of Mary in the Orthodox Church. The honor that is given to Mary is intimately related to her relationship to Christ. The title *Theotokos* was approved at Ephesus in the first place because it helped to affirm the reality of Christ as the *Theanthropos*. Mary is honored, therefore, not in isolation but because of her intimate relationship to Christ, the God who became human. Bishop Kallistos stresses that the designation *Theotokos* "has a precise and basic theological content. It is the safeguard and touchstone of the true faith in the Incarnation, emphasizing as it does that the child to whom Mary bore was not a 'mere' man, not a human person, but the divine person of the only-begotten Son of God, 'one of the Holy Trinity,' yet genuinely incarnate."<sup>6</sup> If Christ is *Theanthropos*, the incarnate God, then Mary, his mother, is



*Theotokos*. Her very title points us to Christ.<sup>7</sup>

In addition to this, the Greek title *Theotokos* also conveys a subtle nuance of meaning that may be overlooked in its usual English translation as “Mother of God,” or worse yet, “Birth-giver of God.” The term not only communicates the idea of divine maternity, but also conveys the sense of “she who contains the divine.” This bears witness to the complete *kenosis*, the self-emptying of God in order to become human. Demonstrating the ineffable, infinite love God has for His creation, this self-emptying is unconditional. Nothing is held back. As St. Paul says, Christ “who, though He was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness. And being found in human form, He humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death – even death upon the cross. Therefore, God has highly exalted Him...” (Phil 2:6-9).

God took His full and complete humanity from a woman, Mary, the *Theotokos*. It is a very significant affirmation and enduring teaching that God became incarnate in Mary “without human seed,” meaning without male participation. The fact that Christ received His humanity solely through His mother points to a vital theological principle that must not be lost here. Could it be that this truth has not been appreciated by those who have diminished the humanity of women through the centuries? The very Incarnation of the Lord through the conscious, willing consent of Mary, challenges all theological and cultural assumptions about the so-called “natural inferiority” of women, as well as the related practices associated with the “impurity” of women.

The Incarnation of the Lord is a unique event that inaugurates the good news of the reign of God, God’s victory over sin and death, even the restoration of communion with God. This is an event that truly had never occurred before in human history. The Incarnation also defies human cultural and

scientific assumptions held during the times of Jesus, as well as our own, including those regarding reproduction and the propagation of the human race, assumptions that may be essentially androcentric. Of course, we also need to consider perspectives of our own era. For example, how could God bring forth the miracle of the Incarnation when Mary, according to contemporary genetic theory, could not possibly pass on the male chromosome to her Son? We pause with astonishment when reflecting upon this great mystery, a mystery that bears witness to the good news of the reign of God where "all things are possible" (Matt 19:26).

In the Vespers service for the Feast of the Annunciation, the following hymn seeks to put to words this ineffable mystery:

The Archangel Gabriel was sent from heaven,  
 To bring to the Virgin the glad tidings of her conception.  
 Coming to Nazareth and marveling at the miracle,  
 He thought within himself:  
 How wonderful that He, whom the heavens cannot comprehend,  
 Is born of a virgin;  
 That He who has heaven for a throne, and earth for a footstool  
 Finds place within a maiden's womb!  
 That He upon whom the six-winged Seraphim  
 And many-eyed Cherubim cannot gaze,  
 Wills to become incarnate of her.  
 By one single word:  
 But it is the Word of God!  
 Yet, why do I stand by and say not to the Virgin:  
 Rejoice, full of grace, the Lord is with you!  
 Rejoice, Virgin purest one;  
 Rejoice, maiden bride!  
 Rejoice, Mother of Life,  
 Blessed is the fruit of your womb! <sup>8</sup>

Secondly, Mary is also called "Ever-Virgin," *aeiparthenos*. This title was formally used to describe her at the Fifth

Ecumenical Council held in Constantinople in 553 and is frequently used in liturgical texts when referring to her. The Orthodox firmly maintain that Mary had no other children after Jesus. The Greek word for "brother" (*adelphos*), as in Mark 3:31, could have a broader significance. The reference can indicate other close relatives or children of Joseph by a previous marriage. At the same time, unlike the theological underpinnings of the term *Theotokos*, the Fifth Ecumenical Council uses the term "Ever-Virgin" in a descriptive manner and attaches no specific doctrinal significance to this word. In a sense, the term is simply a reaffirmation of the reference to the "Virgin Mary" found in the Creed of the Council of Constantinople in 381, often referred to as the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed.

The reference to the virginity of Mary should remind us that perhaps more is implied here than whether Mary had children after the birth of Jesus. The Greek word *parthenia*, virginity, much like the term *Theotokos*, points to more in the Greek than the English translation sometimes indicates. Numerous writings of the early desert ascetics reveal to us that the understanding of virginity (*parthenia*), while it certainly includes the keeping of physical chastity, implies something more. This refers to the discipline that seeks to cultivate purity of heart. Purity of heart may be briefly described here as a kind of unconditional personal integrity in the presence of the living God. At the same time, this is also a dynamic process of growing relationship with the eternal, loving God. The concern not only of the monastic but also of all believers is to conquer their selfish desires and develop a pure heart before God. This is expressed in the words of the Psalm which says: "Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me" (Ps 50 [51]:10). The description of Mary as *aeiparthenos* invites us to reflect deeply upon her personal inner state of integrity before God.<sup>9</sup>

Thirdly, Mary is also frequently called in liturgical and

personal devotions “All-Holy,” *Panagia* and “immaculate” (*archrantos*). These titles were never formally expressed in the decision of an Ecumenical Council, yet they are used frequently by the Orthodox in liturgical prayer and in personal piety. It is very easy for someone from outside the Orthodox family to feel uneasy when encountering these words, since only God is holy. These words could give one pause to wonder if Mary is being worshiped as a ‘divinity’ in her own right. The Orthodox would firmly reject this conclusion.<sup>10</sup> However, the Orthodox have always made it clear that there is an important distinction between our worship of God and the honor we give to Mary and the saints. Mary and the other saints are human persons. Worship (*latrīa*) belongs to God alone. From the Orthodox point of view, veneration (*proskynisis*) or honor (*timi*) can rightly be offered to those human persons who are close to God. Therefore, we honor and fervently pray to those blessed, faithful departed who are alive in Christ, as our brothers and sisters. When we honor Mary and pray to her, we pray to her both as our mother and as our sister among the saints.

Each of these affirmations requires thoughtful elaboration, especially in our dealings with those new to the Orthodox faith and those in other Christian traditions. Yet each term in its own way affirms the unique vocation of Mary in the history of salvation. The honor given to her is intimately related to her relationship to Christ. As such, each of the terms of honor asserts that she is and always will be ‘one of us.’ She is a full member of the human community who fulfilled her particular vocation. The Orthodox have been particularly opposed to any view of Mary which would separate her from the rest of humanity.

As first among all the saints, she not only is the human bridge between the Old and New Testaments, but, as well as all the saints, she is alive in Christ now. The Orthodox uphold that through the life of the Church, she is close to us and

available to us as our helper and intercessor, through the love of the Triune God. Reminding us of the intimate connection between Mary and the whole of salvation history, St. John of Damascus declares that “the name of the Theotokos expresses the whole mystery of God’s saving dispensation.” <sup>11</sup>

These perspectives are reflected in the following hymn from the Liturgy of St. Basil:

O full of grace, you are the joy of all creation,  
Of the hierarchy of angels and of all the human race,  
Hallowed temple,  
Paradise of the Word,  
The glory of virginity.  
From you, God took flesh and became a little child,  
He, who is from eternity our God.  
Your womb, He took as throne,  
Your body, He made wider than the heavens.  
O full of grace, you are the joy of all creation!  
Glory to You! <sup>12</sup>

### MARY’S WITNESS FOR US TODAY

Mary is the true and faithful servant of God who is blessed because “she heard the word of God and kept it” (Luke 11:28). Her life bears witness to many insights that may benefit our relationship with God, as we too seek to grow in holiness. While Mary is sometimes presented in popular piety as a model for women, such an approach diminishes her significance for every believer. She is an example for every person, male and female, who wishes to follow Christ. While she had a very special role in the history of salvation, she is a person of faith who responded to the call of the Lord God with freedom and enthusiasm.

With this in mind, there are five theological observations about Mary that are especially important and valuable for every believer. We can find the basis for these insights expressed already in the story of the Annunciation of Mary

found in the Gospel of Luke.<sup>13</sup> While the scriptural references to Mary are limited, the Orthodox Church has reflected deeply upon them throughout the centuries.

### **I. Theocentricity**

The first observation is centered upon the characteristic of theocentricity. Mary's life is centered upon God. Let us remember the words of Mary when she says: "My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my savior" (Luke 1:46-7). Mary's initial response to Gabriel's greeting is not a testimony to human self-reliance. She does not use this opportunity to call attention to her own abilities that may have helped her to be true to God through challenging times. These and other similar alternative responses, silly as they may sound, have never been uncommon for human beings during her time on earth, throughout history, or today where one frequently encounters the self-centered assertion, "It's all about me." Instead, Mary's first reaction offers us a small but important pointer to her inner life. She affirms her dependence upon God. Her response reminds us of these words of the Lord recorded by St. Luke: "Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also" (Luke 12:34).

Mary's first words of her song of praise direct our attention to what was growing in the depths of her heart. She was already enjoying the loving immediacy of God. While all of humankind still suffered with the consequences of the Fall, she exclaims that God abides with us! This God-centered life is not an anxious obsession to appease a distant and judgmental divinity, one who barely hears the cries of His people. Rather, her fiat bears witness to a compassionate and intimate God who stands with the lowly. This is a God who loved us first, and never ceases to love us as His daughters and sons.

Mary's song extols the reign of God that she has accepted

freely. The Good News and the inauguration of the reign of God began in a special way *for Mary* on the day of the Annunciation. This was the same Good News which was proclaimed publicly by her Son over thirty years later, where He declared: "The time is fulfilled, and the reign of God has come near; repent and believe in the Good News" (Mark 1:14).

The Annunciation is a unique event that took place "in the fullness of time" (Gal 4:4). Because of this, Mary enjoys an intimacy with God her Savior that will never be duplicated. At the same time, St. Gregory of Nyssa makes an interesting amendment to this affirmation when he speaks of the relationship between Mary and us. He says:

What came about in bodily form in Mary, the fullness of the godhead shining through Christ in the Blessed Virgin, takes place in a similar way in every soul that has been made pure. The Lord does not come in bodily form, for 'we no longer know Christ according to the flesh,' but He dwells in us spiritually and the Father takes up His abode with Him, the Gospel tells us... In this way the child Jesus is born to each one of us.<sup>14</sup>

As stated earlier, the Orthodox see Mary and her dignity always in intimate relationship with Christ and with us. From the day of the angel's message, she points us to Christ. At the same time, her Son's message is still new for us today: "The time is fulfilled, and the reign of God has come near; repent and believe in the Good News" (Mark 1:14) Despite our personal circumstances, we too are invited to reach for the God who loved us first as did Mary.

St. Gregory of Nyssa also strongly urges us to "look at Him." He points to the greater reality that God's infinite love already resides deep within us. He says this:

For this is the safest way to protect the good things you enjoy: Realize how much your Creator has honored you

above all creatures. He did not make the heavens in His image, nor the moon, the sun, the beauty of the stars or anything else that surpasses understanding. You alone are a reflection of eternal beauty, a receptacle of happiness, an image of the true light. And, if you look at Him, you will become what He is, imitating Him who shines within you, whose glory is reflected in your purity. Nothing in the entire creation can equal your grandeur. All the heavens can fit into the palm of the hand of God.... Although He is so great that He can hold all creation in His palm, you can wholly embrace Him. He dwells within you.<sup>15</sup>

St. Gregory of Narek, a tenth-century monk, expresses this intimate relationship between each of us and God in the following simple prayer:

There was a time when I did not exist. And you created me.  
I did not ask you for favor. And you fulfilled it.  
I had not come into light. And you have seen me.  
I had not yet appeared. And you have taken pity on me.  
I had not called upon you. And you have taken care of me.<sup>16</sup>

## **II. Freedom**

The second observation about Mary concerns the reality of human freedom. Mary exercises her free will in responding to the invitation of Gabriel. Let us remember the words of Mary when she says: "Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word" (Luke 1:38). In the story of the Annunciation, Mary freely responds to the invitation to share in the coming of the Lord in a very special way. God did not compel her. God did not force her. Mary had the full human freedom to respond.

Mary's response bears witness to her freedom and to what it means to be a human person. Perhaps one of the most important qualities of being human is the capacity for the exercise of freedom. Freedom is a fundamental aspect of human persons endowed with self-consciousness and a conscience.



It is certainly one of the most important gifts given to human persons since this is among the qualities that set us apart from other living creatures. It is through the process of freely making choices, where we become more fully human. Throughout our lives, God calls us to freely respond to Him. He says to each of us: "I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing; therefore choose life" (Deut 30:19).

As a conscious being, the human person is never coerced by the God of love to love Him or others. Perhaps God could have created human beings to be more like robots or computers. This, however, would also negate other important qualities of human personhood that are related to our ability to choose. A robot, for example, cannot experience love or freely give love.

St John Chrysostom reminds us of the importance of our freedom in relationship to God when he says:

Since God loves human beings and is beneficent, He does what He can so that we may radiate virtue. God wants us to win glory, and because of this He does not draw anyone by force or constraint. Rather, God attracts by persuasion and kindness all those who are willing to respond and so wins them over... God wishes to have no servant who is unwilling or who is forced into His service. God wants all to come of their own free will and choice, and with gratitude to Him for this grace.<sup>17</sup>

There are two important aspects of freedom here that must be identified. The first is freedom from sin. "Sin" is not a very popular word in many circles today. But "sin" in this case does not have to be defined in terms of the disobeying of abstract, yet judgmental, moralistic rules. On a more profound level, sin is deeply personal because it promotes the distortion of relationships. Sin deeply affects relationships. It affects our relationship with our own selves, with others, with creation and God. The Orthodox would state that human persons were not created by God to sin but to share in His

goodness and life. Therefore, sin is profoundly unnatural!

The second aspect of freedom is the freedom to grow in holiness. For us, this is the Lord's call to a new, abundant life. He reminds us of the centrality of this "abundant life" when He says: "I have come that they may have life. Life in abundance" (John 10:10). The invitation of Christ to share in this "abundant life" is a call to move from the dead end of self-centeredness to God-centeredness, from brokenness to wholeness, from isolation to integration, from sinfulness to fruitfulness. Through our free and affirmative response, this invitation becomes the basis for our journey. It is because of this journey that the believer enters more deeply into the "abundant life" offered by God. It is a new life in which the disciple becomes aware of the love of the Father, by means of the saving activity of Christ, through the fellowship of the Holy Spirit. It is a new life through which the love of God is shared in a personal way. It is experienced to the very depths of our being.

God respects our freedom and an example *par excellence* of this respect is given to us at the Annunciation. When the angel related God's plan to Mary, he was, in a deep sense, sharing God's hope for the entire cosmos. God took a risk of infinite proportions at that moment since Mary, on behalf of all humanity, could have said "no." The angel had to wait for her response. And it is with both wonder and humility that Mary joyfully offers her consent and, by so doing, speaks on behalf of every man and woman who seek to have God enter their life.

Mary's intentional act of obedience is in contrast to the willful disobedience we see in the story of Adam and Eve. The old Eve refuses to cooperate with the will of God for her life. Instead, in disobedience, she and Adam choose to turn away from God in order to become 'gods without God.' This alienates them from God's life-giving providence and consequently from each other. Their action seems to set a pattern

for subsequent generations. Rather than growing with God in the garden of perfect possibilities, humanity has been suffering the many consequences of the Fall. Among the worst consequences of the Fall are the loss of fellowship with God, sin, death and distorted relationships. From this point on, human relationships become distorted. Human beings passed on from one generation to the next the propensity for distorted relationships, which further misdirected us from authentic life with God, each other and creation.

Mary's representative "yes" to the angelic invitation puts an end to this tragic cycle. Because of the significance of her free response, she has been viewed by the early Fathers of the Church as the "New Eve." This theme can be found in writers such as St. Justin the Martyr, St. Irenaeus of Lyons and St. Epiphanius of Salamis. It is a theme that would become popular in subsequent teachers of both the East and the West.

St. Irenaeus reflects the tradition when he says:

Just as Eve, wife of Adam, yes, yet still a virgin became by her disobedience the cause of death for herself and for the whole human race, so Mary, too, betrothed but still a virgin, became through her obedience the cause of salvation for herself and the whole human race...and so it was that the knot of Eve's disobedience was loosed by Mary's obedience. For what the virgin Eve bound fast by her refusal to believe, the Virgin Mary unbound by her faith.<sup>18</sup>

### **III. Humility**

The third observation about Mary concerns the virtue of humility. Mary receives the invitation to share in God's plan with true humility. Let us remember the words of Mary when she says: "For He looked with favor on the lowliness of His servant. Surely, from now on all generations will call me blessed" (Luke 1:48).

Mary presents us with a valuable expression of true humility. For the Orthodox perspective, humility is essential for the proper exercise of freedom. It is through humility that we are free to become our truest selves in relationship with God. From this perspective, humility is both a condition of being and an active discipline.

Through its Latin roots, the word "humility" refers to being "of the earth" or "being grounded," so to speak. It is the discipline of being grounded in the identity of who we really are as sons and daughters of God. It is the recognition of our truest personal identity in relationship to our Creator.

Humility is often misunderstood because it is confused with humiliation. But these are two very different phenomena! Humility is the virtue which facilitates our being "right-sized;" that is, not too great and not too small in the presence of God, other human persons and creation. In a sense, we know who we are in relationship to God, and this enables us to engage others authentically. It can be said here that humility is the blessed highway through which the "life in abundance" makes itself accessible to us.

True humility is the opposite of the sin of pride. The sin of pride can be described as the selfish desire to become god without God. Pride is a vice that distracts us from our true vocation. It causes us to fall into the delusion that we are the center of the universe. It can be said here that pride leads to a dead end.

Sadly, if we abide in the delusion that we are at the center of the universe, then there is no chance for authentic relationship with God, other human persons, creation, even with our own selves! Whenever we are at the center of our own universe, all other persons, divine and human, essentially are reduced to mere objects to be manipulated. And we progressively become more easily distracted as we listen for those voices that feed this delusion.

Humiliation is quite different from humility. Humiliation is

a vice typically used as a weapon to control others. It is all too frequently employed in the ice-cold service of pride. Some have referred to the effects of humiliation as “soul murder.” Humiliation is an attack upon the identity of the person created in the “image and likeness of God” (Gen 1:26). Sadly, the virtue of humility and the vice of humiliation are often confused in the minds and hearts of many persons, including persons in leadership, even Orthodox Christian leadership.

Genuine humility, paradoxically, helps us to know ourselves in relationship to God and frees us from false understandings of self. This foundation helps us summon forth the audacity to approach God, as we are redeemed creatures bearing the divine “image and likeness” (Gen 1:26). Humility provides the healthy soil from which our relationships with God, others, creation, even our own selves, may grow. As this is a living relationship, people are encouraged to constantly examine themselves in the presence of God.

St. Gregory of Nyssa speaks of the importance of truly knowing ourselves when he says:

Our greatest protection is self-knowledge, and the avoidance of the delusion that we are seeing ourselves when we are really looking at something else. This is what happens to those who do not examine themselves: What they see is strength, beauty, reputation, political power, great wealth, pomp, self-importance, bodily stature...and they think that this is what they really are. Such persons make very poor guardians of themselves. Because of their absorption in something else, they overlook what is their own and leave it unguarded. How can a person protect what he does not know? The most secure protection for our treasure is to know ourselves: each one of us must know himself as he is so that he may not be unconsciously protecting something else other than himself.<sup>19</sup>

#### IV. Collaboration with God

The fourth observation about Mary concerns the invitation to be a co-worker with God. Let us remember her words when she says: "For the mighty One has done great things for me, and holy is His name. His mercy is for those who fear Him, from generation to generation" (Luke 1:49-50).

Mary provides for us the supreme example of collaboration or *synergy* with God. Synergy is a term used by the Orthodox that identifies the active cooperation between God and human persons. St. Paul uses a form of this word in his first letter to the Corinthians, when he says: "For we are co-workers (*synergoi*) with God, you are God's field, God's building" (1 Cor 3:9). Our relationship with God involves us in the process of divine reconciliation and healing. There is a sense that we are co-workers or collaborators with God in the salvation of the world.

This bold affirmation endures as an important teaching within Orthodox theology. Synergy begins with our personal cooperation with God for the sake of our own salvation, but this is not a private process. We are not saved in isolation. We are also involved with God for the salvation of others and the whole world. This perspective in no way seeks to diminish God as our Savior and as the giver of salvation. But this perspective recognizes that God does call us to share in the process as His collaborators. Mary provides a very positive example of this collaboration. Speaking of the collaboration of God and the Theotokos, St. Irenaeus says quite boldly: "Mary cooperates with the economy."<sup>20</sup>

In his discussion of the Beatitudes, St. Gregory of Nyssa speaks of this collaboration especially with reference to the work of the peacemaker. St. Gregory says the peacemakers are those

...who imitate the love of God for humankind, who reveal in their own lives the characteristics of God's activity. The

Lord and giver of good things completely annihilates anything that is without affinity and foreign to goodness. This work He also directs for you. Namely, to cast out hatred and abolish war, to exterminate envy and banish strife, to get rid of hypocrisy, and to extinguish from within resentment of injuries which linger in the heart.<sup>21</sup>

We believe that God is all-powerful and self-sufficient. These are among the most basic characteristics of God. Yet the story of Mary as well as other stories from the New Testament and the stories of the saints throughout the ages remind us that God calls us to join with Him, not only for our own salvation, but also as His partners in the work of salvation of the world.

The fourteenth-century theologian, St. Nicholas Cabasilas reflects upon the collaborative work of Mary with God's plan for the salvation of the world when he says:

The Incarnation was not only the work of the Father and of His Power and His Spirit...but it was also the work of the will and faith of the Virgin. Without the consent of the all-pure one and the cooperation of her faith, this plan would have been as unrealizable as it would have been without the intervention of the three Divine Persons themselves. Only after teaching and persuading her does God take her for His Mother and receive from her the flesh that she wills to offer Him. Just as He voluntarily became incarnate, so He willed that His mother should bear Him freely, with her own full and free consent.<sup>22</sup>

We are reminded of the example of the collaboration of Mary and the other saints at virtually every opportunity for common prayer within the Orthodox Church. This is because human collaboration with God is an important element of the gospel dynamic. As the story of Mary reminds us, believers are called to share in the divine activity of reconciliation in Christ. In the prayers of the Church, therefore, we hear regularly the following petition: "Calling to remembrance our all-

holy, pure, most blessed and glorified Lady, the Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary, together with all of the saints, let us commend ourselves and one another and our whole life unto Christ our God.”

God has not given up on inviting us to join with Him for the salvation of the world. He calls us today! St. Nicholas Cabasilas writes about this essential quality of the loving God when he says:

God pours himself out in an ecstasy of love. He does not remain in the Heavens and call to Himself the servant he loves. No, He himself descends and searches out such a servant, and comes near, and lets His love be seen, as He seeks what is like Himself. From those who despise Him, He does not depart; He shows no anger toward those who defy Him, but follows them to their very doors, and endures all things, and even dies, in order to demonstrate His love.

All this is true, but we have not yet declared the highest things of all: for not merely does God enter in close fellowship with His servants and extend to them His hand, but He has given Himself wholly to us, so that we become temples of the living God, and our members are the members of Christ. The head of these members is worshiped by the cherubim, and these hands and feet are joined to that heart.<sup>23</sup>

Notice how this reference talks about God’s unyielding love. It is a love “to folly.” God is not unlike a fool in love with us. He stands by us even as we reject and ignore Him, day after day; and even dies to demonstrate this love! St. Nicholas Cabasilas then goes on to tell us there is something else even more wonderful than this. God desires to join with us so that we become His hands and feet, joined to His heart. These vivid and powerful words serve to emphasize the basis of the collaboration to which God calls His sons and daughters.

This passage from St. Nicholas Cabasilas also gives us insight into Mary’s relationship with God. Perhaps it is not unreasonable to say that Mary had been open to the divine



love and willingly cooperating with God's love ever since the first moment of her existence. Her invitation to become the Mother of God the Word, in a deep sense, was the opportunity for which God was waiting, "in the fullness of time" (Gal 4:4).

As a result of her cooperation with God, St. Epiphanius tells us:

Mary had been the occasion of life and through her, life had been born in us. It is for this reason that the Son of God has come into the world. 'There where sin had abounded, grace had more abounded' (Rom 5:20) . . . When death came, life came and more of it in order that life might come in place of death, chasing death which came to us through a woman. And He came to us precisely through a woman and thus became for us the Life.<sup>24</sup>

## **V. Relationship**

Our fifth and final theological observation about Mary concerns the value of relationship. Let us remember the words of Mary when she says: "He has helped His servant Israel in remembrance of His mercy, according to the promise He made to our ancestors, to Abraham and to his descendants, forever" (Luke 1:54-55).

Authentic relationship is a consequence of the positive expression of our human freedom. Simply stated, we can either freely choose to love another or turn our gaze away. When we turn towards another in loving relationship, we become caught up in their life to some degree. We also share our life with them. When we freely turn to God in humility, we deepen our relationship with Him and we become caught up in the divine activity of salvation.

There is an ancient axiom that states: "A solitary Christian is no Christian." This means that the very definition of Christian implies both a relationship with Christ and a re-

lationship with others who are faithful followers of Christ, both living and departed. When we are united with Christ, we are also united with each other. As Christians, our discipleship is one in which we are not simply guided to the Father through Christ in the Spirit. Our discipleship is such that each of us is “knit together” with everyone else who is in Christ, both living and departed. St. Paul tells us that “we must grow up in every way into Him who is the head, into Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by every ligament with which it is equipped, as each part is working properly, promotes the body's growth in building itself up in love” (Eph 4:16).

Every one of us is created by the same Trinitarian God. Because of this, there is a foundational relationship among us, which is established in the very structure of creation. According to the Orthodox perspective, we are relational beings from the beginning. We are conciliar persons. We are called to relationship. To be a “person” from this perspective calls us to “face forward.” “Facing forward” connotes the essential meaning of the theological Greek word for person, *prosopon*. Perhaps to take it one step further, facing forward compels us to “reach out.”

Again, the story of example of Mary is very illuminating. Shortly after the Annunciation, we see Mary seeking out her cousin Elizabeth. Mary could not keep her joy to herself. The experience of God's invitation, the “Good News” had to be shared. Mary “had” to reach out to Elizabeth. And so, we see how the gospel dynamic had already begun to work among God's people.

Whenever we choose to turn away, rather than reach out, we run the risk of becoming “individuals.” A number of leading contemporary Orthodox theologians, including Metropolitan John Zizioulas, Metropolitan Maximos Aghiorgoussis, Bishop Kallistos Ware, Professor Christos Yannaras and Father Dumitru Staniloae, of blessed memory,

have emphasized the importance of the “person” as distinguished from the “individual”. When we speak of the “individual” from this theological perspective, we are usually referring to a human being who is isolated, self-contained and self-absorbed.

A “person,” on the other hand, is a unique human being in a growing relationship with others. The Greek word *proso-pon* means “facing forward.” And the Latin word *persona* means “sounding through.” Both terms, while not identical in connotation, nevertheless imply a dynamic relationship with another reality. Mindful of the Trinitarian relationships, we could say that the human being is truly a person when he or she is open to the other, is engaged in a growing relationship, and is in communion. We encounter daily countless temptations toward individualism and, hence, isolationism. In the face of this, we must affirm that we become more fully human when we are *persons* in a loving relationship with God and with others.

This loving relationship also includes those cherished ones who have gone before us, the saints and among them, Mary the Theotokos. When we turn our gaze to her image in an icon, we see her most often in the presence of her Son, in some manner directing our attention to Him. We see this, for example, in the popular “*Hodegitria*” icon. The title of this icon may be translated as “she who guides” or “she who directs.” Mary is depicted holding the infant Jesus with her left hand. With her right hand, she points to the Lord, as if beckoning us to come to Him. At this moment, she abides in the presence of the loving, all-merciful God. Not unlike her initial reaching out to her cousin Elizabeth, she compassionately reaches out to us from paradise, now through her intercessory prayer. As followers of the Lord, we are intimately related to Him and to one another. This principle of interrelationship is the basis of our prayers to one another and for one another.

### Conclusion

The Orthodox Church has a rich understanding of Mary the Theotokos. It is an understanding that is rooted in the witness of scripture and tradition. It is expressed through the liturgical services of the Church and in the piety of the faithful. In honoring Mary, the Church simply affirms the fact that God first honored her in calling her to be the mother of Jesus Christ. The honor that the Church gives to her recognizes her unique vocation in the divine plan of salvation. At the same time, the honor that we direct to her reminds us that Mary is truly one of us. She is one with us in our humanity and in our discipleship. As such, she provides us with a valuable example of a person of faith. She is truly the one who "heard the word of God and kept it" (Luke 11:28).

Today, radiant, even more joyful and eager than ever, Mary, the Theotokos, desires to share the Good News about her Son with us and direct us to Him. And so, with this in mind, the Church sings to her:

It is truly fitting to sing your praises, O Theotokos,  
The ever-blessed, pure and Mother of our God.  
You are more honorable than the cherubim,  
Beyond compare more glorious than the seraphim.  
In virginity you gave birth to God the Word.  
Most Holy Theotokos, You do we magnify.<sup>25</sup>

### NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Vesper Hymn, Feast of the Nativity of Christ.

<sup>2</sup> St. Gregory the Theologian, *Homily* 23:12.

<sup>3</sup> St. Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, 4:20:6.

<sup>4</sup> Kallistos Ware, *The Orthodox Way* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2001), 79-80.

<sup>5</sup> Among the important essays from Orthodox theologians dealing with Mary the Theotokos, the following should be noted: Kallistos Ware, "The Sanctity and Glory of the Mother of God," *The Way* (Supplement 51,

Autumn, 1984), 79-94; Elizabeth Behr-Sigel, *The Ministry of Women in the Church*, (Redondo Beach, CA: Oakwood Publications, 1991), 181-216; Vladimir Lossky, "Panagia," in E. L. Mascall, ed., *The Mother of God*, (London; Dacre Press, 1949), 24-37; reprinted in *In the Image and Likeness of God*, (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1994), 195-210; Georges Florovsky, "The Ever-Virgin Mother of God," in E. L. Mascall, ed., *The Mother of God*, 52-63; reprinted in Georges Florovsky, *Creation and Redemption*, (Belmont, MA: Nordland, 1976), 171-178; Françoise Jeanlin, "The Place of the Mother of God, the Theotokos, in the Orthodox Church in Relation to the Ordination of Women," in *The Place of Woman in the Church and the Question of the Ordination of Women*, ed. Gennadios Limouris, (Katerini, Greece: Tertios Publications, 1988), 133-155.

<sup>6</sup> Ware, *The Orthodox Way*, p. 80.

<sup>7</sup> Vesper Hymn, Feast of the Annunciation.

<sup>8</sup> Ware, *The Orthodox Way*, 80-81.

<sup>9</sup> For some reflection on the Orthodox response to the Roman Catholic view of the Immaculate Conception, see Bishop Kallistos Ware, *The Orthodox Way*, 76-78. See also his article noted above, "The Sanctity and Glory of the Mother of God," 86-92.

<sup>10</sup> St. John of Damascus, *The Orthodox Faith*, 3:12.

<sup>11</sup> The Liturgy of St. Basil.

<sup>12</sup> For significant insights into the Feasts of Mary, see Elizabeth Behr-Sigel, *The Ministry of Women in the Church*, 184-203.

<sup>13</sup> St. Gregory of Nyssa, *On Virginity*, 2.

<sup>14</sup> St. Gregory of Nyssa, *On the Song of Songs*, 2.

<sup>15</sup> St. Gregory of Narek, *The Lamentations*.

<sup>16</sup> St. John Chrysostom, *Homily on the Gospel of John*, 10.

<sup>17</sup> St. Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, 3:22:1; see also, St. Justin the Martyr, *Dialogue with Trypho*, 100.

<sup>18</sup> St. Gregory of Nyssa, *On the Song of Songs*, 1.

<sup>19</sup> St. Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, 3:21:7.

<sup>20</sup> St. Gregory of Nyssa, *On the Beatitudes*, Homily 7.

<sup>21</sup> St. Nicholas Cabasilas, *On the Annunciation*, 4-5.

<sup>22</sup> St. Epiphanius, *Panarion*, 128.

<sup>23</sup> Magnificat Hymn from the Matins Service. See also its use in the Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom.

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## **A Self-Offering God and His Begotten Wisdom (Proverbs 8:22-24)**

EUGEN J. PENTIUC

Three are the texts to be discussed succinctly in this paper. All three come from the Book of Proverbs<sup>1</sup> (Prov 8:22, 23, 24) and deal primarily with the birth of Wisdom<sup>2</sup> in terms of God's self-offering; a self-offering which mirrors the Creator's genuine and tender love towards his Wisdom. "Poured out as a libation," "acquired not created," or "delivered in great labors" – here are three powerful metaphors that encapsulate one of the greatest *cruxes* of Christian faith: Although con-substantial with God the Father, the Wisdom is nevertheless begotten by Him. And what is even more surprising, the birth of Wisdom does not come easily. The Book of Proverbs hints at God's three creative ways, lying beyond the three metaphors mentioned above, by which the birth of Wisdom turns into an eternal event. These divine ways are: prompt self-offering, ambiguous acquiring, and mysterious laboring. Interestingly, the metaphors and the divine ways mirrored by them, do not apply exclusively to the Creator; in other words, they are not only God's attributes. In fact, the Creator's willingness and propensity towards self-offering is naturally handed over to the Wisdom who in her turn desires to share it with those following in her footsteps. Hence, the long, uninterrupted, free-willing series of self-offerings, beginning with the Creator, through the Wisdom up to humans created in the image of God. Old and New Testaments are the text-witnesses of such a shifting of guards in self-offering to others. The following exegetical comments are ar-

rayed under three rubrics matching the three metaphors (or rather God's three ways) which describe the birth of Wisdom by God the Creator.

### 1. POURED OUT AS A LIBATION

**Proverbs 8:23:** "From everlasting, I was poured out as a libation, from the beginning, before the earth [was made]."

The central verb in the above quotation is *nāsak*, meaning 'to pour out ([liquid] as a libation), to anoint, to appoint, to set.'<sup>3</sup> In Proverbs 8:23, the personified Wisdom<sup>4</sup> declares majestically that she "was poured out (as a libation)." The immediate question that arises is, *By whom?* A careful reading indicates that it was by God the Creator, whose intense love for his Wisdom is portrayed here as a fount bursting forth, unable to be contained. It is not simply Wisdom, depicted here as a body of water that pours out; it is also abundant fatherly love, goodness and power. God begets his Wisdom (Prov 8:22) as will be summed up so precisely in the Nicene Creed, when referencing Christ, the incarnate Logos: he is "begotten and not made." The Creator begets his Wisdom "from everlasting,"<sup>5</sup> or "from the beginning,"<sup>6</sup> but since the latter phrase may seem quite ambiguous, the author adds, "before the earth [was made]."<sup>7</sup> In addition to giving us a temporal framework in which to understand the original expression of God's Wisdom, this phrasing also serves to eliminate any assumption that Wisdom was "poured out" at the same time as the earth or other elements of the creation were brought into reality. Unlike the earth, Wisdom was not created, but was begotten before time, poured out by the eternal fountain of love, that is, the Creator. This text accords with a rather long passage from the Wisdom of Solomon (Wis 7:22-8:1) where Wisdom, named *technitis* "designer" (of God), is depicted as sharing the same divine nature with the Creator himself. In Wisdom 7:25, for instance, the Wisdom is considered the



“pure emanation of the Almighty’s glory.” The Greek word *aporroia* (emanation)<sup>8</sup> may connote both consubstantiality and distinctiveness, pertaining to the Creator-Wisdom relationship. The text of Wisdom 7:25 may be considered an early interpretation<sup>9</sup> of Proverbs 8:23 where Wisdom is “poured out (as a libation).” But in Wisdom 7:25 the consubstantiality with the Father is much better emphasized than in Proverbs 8:23. The former text does underline the source of such a pouring out or emanation. The source is the glory (*doxa*)<sup>10</sup> of the Almighty (*pantokratōr*). In the Old Testament the divine glory is the equivalent to the face of God (Exod 33:18-23), or, to use a philosophical term, to the divine essence. Thus, Wisdom shares the same essence with God the Creator. The text of Wisdom 7:25 is the last development of the idea of wisdom ushering in the revelation of the New Testament, especially the Prologue of John where the attributes of the Wisdom are transferred to the Word (Logos) of God (cf. John 1).

The text of Proverbs 8:23 offers us insight into a quite important theological idea. Since time immemorial, Wisdom has had a propensity towards sacrifice. This propensity towards sacrifice is inherited by the Wisdom from the Creator. He is the first One to self-offer himself. Thus, Wisdom is depicted in Proverbs 8:23 as a libation, a flowing offering from eternity. Moreover, the Creator begets Wisdom as a pouring out of himself, as a self-offering: the cause of Wisdom is presented here as the Father’s self-offering. This depicts the continuity of the persons of the Trinity; just as the Father offers himself to beget Wisdom, so Wisdom, alluding to the Son, offers herself to restore the balance and harmony of a creation tilting towards chaos and perdition. The text also emphasizes the purity and the uniqueness of the divine sacrifice, as evident in Christ’s words to Mary Magdalene at the tomb very early on Sunday morning, “Do not touch me, for I have not yet ascended to my Father” (John 20:17). Jesus

refers to himself in this vignette as a sacrifice which must not be sullied by any human hands prior to its presentation to the Father.

In Psalm 2:6 the same verb *nāsak* ‘to pour, to appoint’ is used regarding God’s king on Sion: “As for me, I was poured out (anointed) king by him on Sion, his holy mountain.” The Septuagint and pre-Masoretic text assume the passive conjugation (*niphal* in Hebrew), “I was poured out (appointed),” rather than the active conjugation, “I appointed my king,” with God speaking (as in the Masoretic Text). During the Babylonian captivity (586-539 B.C.), this royal psalm came to be read and understood as a messianic text, and so the king on Sion was considered the royal Messiah, who declares, as Wisdom, that he was “appointed as leader (with a libation)”; in other words, he was anointed with the liquid chrism. The particular lexical form<sup>11</sup> used in this passage might be taken as a hint of sacrifice, of the shedding of Messiah’s blood on Sion. If this holds correct, then this prophetic message has its historical fulfillment in Christ’s crucifixion. Taken together, Wisdom, begotten before time, is also the Logos of the New Testament, and his eternal birth from the Father (Prov 8:22-23), and his birth in time (Ps 2:7)<sup>12</sup> and dwelling among humans speak of the Messiah’s sacrificial propensities and commitments on humanity’s behalf.

The particular meaning of the verb *nāsak*, ‘to pour out’ or ‘to bring a libation (liquid offering)’ specifically designates a liquid offering. We note that an important corollary appears in the New Testament, when Jesus presents himself as a source of living water, and affirms his readiness to share this living water with his disciples. This living water will, according to Jesus’ own testimony, become a well in the disciples, and will spring into eternity. Thus, there is a circle of living water flowing from everlasting with the Creator’s begetting of Wisdom, and returning to eternity with Messiah’s disciples, who have been incorporated into the cycle of eter-

nal life, that is, a cycle of loving self-offerings. "But whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst," says Jesus, "But the water that I shall give him will become in him a fountain of water springing up unto everlasting life" (John 4:14); or, "He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water" (John 7:38; cf. Rev 22:17). That the metaphor of living water may be extended into eternity can be deduced from the Book of Revelation, "And he showed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding from the throne of God and of the Lamb" (Rev 22:1). The use of the verb *nāsak* and its variants is therefore crucial to our theological understandings of time, the divine unity, and the role of Wisdom as an agent operating in this world on behalf of humanity.<sup>13</sup>

### ACQUIRED BY GOD

**Proverbs 8:22 (MT):** "Yahweh acquired (begot) me as (at) the beginning of his journey, before his works of old."

The idea of self-offering or self-sacrifice is also found in Proverbs 8:22 (in the Masoretic Text only), in the imagery of the Creator acquiring (begetting) Wisdom.

The basic meaning of the Hebrew verb *qānā* is 'to acquire.'<sup>14</sup> Note though, that in the earlier uses in Semitic languages (for instance, Ugaritic and Old Hebrew) the same root is used to indicate 'birthing, begetting,' which accords well with the basic idea of the later Hebrew root, 'to acquire,' inferring, namely, the acquisition of something or someone that (who) existed before, but did not belong to the acquirer. A similar semantic development occurred with respect to things that may be acquired through creation or purchase. This gave rise to added meaning inherent in the proto-Semitic root *\*q-n-y* (Hebrew: *qānā*), specifically, 'to create, produce' and 'to buy.' Since Proverbs 8:22 depicts the Wisdom as a person, we may consider that the meaning

'to beget' (or 'acquiring' through birth) is more suitable than 'to create.' The Septuagint's choice of *ktizō* (to create, to lay a foundation) is explainable from the perspective of third-century B.C. Jewish translators, for whom monotheism was the most important dogmatic tenet of their faith. The Hebrew text, then, is more ambiguous than the Septuagint, and leaves greater space for interpretation. Therefore, for practical reasons, and holding tightly to monotheism, the Septuagint intended to make a clear distinction between God, the Creator, and Wisdom, the principle of creation, 'created' or 'made' rather than 'begotten' by God.<sup>15</sup> It is worth remembering that the same root is used by Eve at the birth of Cain, "I have acquired (*qānītī*) a man (*ʾiš*) with the help (*ʾet*) of Yahweh" (Gen 4:1). This formulation underscores the idea that Eve is not the creator of her offspring; that at each birth, it is God who continues to act as the Creator.<sup>16</sup>

With respect to the time of bringing forth Wisdom, Proverbs 8:22 states that this occurred before the acts of God, his works of old, 'as (at) the beginning' of God's activity<sup>17</sup> from inside to outside. In this case, Wisdom was the beginning, the principle or the means by which God created the entire world. This reading has triggered a long line of interpretations emphasizing Wisdom's role in the act of creation. This is an especially cogent construal when coupled with other biblical texts, such as Psalm 104:24, "Oh Lord, how great are your works, *with wisdom* you have made them all." Additionally, in his prologue the evangelist John combines an understanding of both interpretive possibilities of the term *rēʾšit* (beginning) as it is found in Proverbs 8:22, namely, "as / at the beginning," stating emphatically, "*In the beginning (en archē)* was the word and the word was with God; and the word was God. He was in the beginning with God; all things were made *through him (di' autou)* and without him nothing was made that was made" (John 1:1-3).

## BROUGHT FORTH IN LABOR PAINS

**Proverbs 8:24:** "There was still no deep, when I was brought forth (through labor pains), no springs rich (heavy) in water."

The meaning of the verbal root, *h-w-l*, used in Proverbs 8:24, is 'to writhe, to tremble, to be in labor.'<sup>18</sup> This verse depicts the acquisition of Wisdom by the Creator through the birth mechanism, but not in the sense of a conventional birth.<sup>19</sup> Wisdom is brought forth through labor pains; that is, the birth occurs as an act of volition by the Creator, which implies that the birth of Wisdom is an act of self-offering, an offering of love, an act of deliberation on God's part.

Regarding time, v. 24 tells us that the bringing forth of the wisdom "occurred" before the "deep."<sup>20</sup> The 'deep' in Ancient Near Eastern cosmogonies is the watery abyss on which rest both the earth's disc and the canopy of heaven (cf. Gen 1:2; Job 38:30; Ps 104:6). Reference to this abyss in Proverbs 8:24 signifies that Wisdom was begotten before the abyss existed. Wisdom, in other words, was pre-existent, and instrumental in God's domination over chaos, and his creation of the cosmos. Specifically, from Genesis 1:2 we learn that the 'deep' (*tēhōm*) was there when God began to create the visible world; but both the Hebrew text and the Septuagint are reluctant to use the verb *to be* when they mention the presence of the primeval deep. The deep and the darkness, sealing off this deep,<sup>21</sup> are neutral realities, which were *allowed*<sup>22</sup> by God to exist or, more precisely, *to attend* as instruments or enticing *loci* to test the free reason-endowed creatures, such as angels and humans. From that point on, the deep became the dwelling-place of the evil spirits and their followers.<sup>23</sup> But Proverbs 8:24 tells us that Wisdom is prior to the deep. Thus Wisdom is co-eternal with Creator; she is not simply allowed to exist, as in the deep's case, but rather acquired/begotten by the Creator 'to be' (*'ehye*) his equal companion (or 'confidant' [*āmōn*]; cf. Prov 8:30) in the Almighty's great adventure, the Creation.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> THE BOOK OF PROVERBS IS TRADITIONALLY ATTRIBUTED TO SOLOMON, DAVID'S SON AND SUCCESSOR. IN FACT, PARTS OF THE BOOK (CHS. 10-22; 25-29), CONTAIN ANCIENT MATERIAL AND THERE IS NO REASON TO DOUBT THAT THESE PASSAGES DATE FROM SOLOMON'S TIME. AS FOR THE LONG INTRODUCTION OF THE BOOK (CHS. 1-9), DUE TO ITS SIMILARITIES WITH POST-EXILIC WRITINGS, IT IS SURELY LATER, PERHAPS DATING FROM THE FIFTH CENTURY B.C.; THIS IS ALSO THE DATE WHEN THE BOOK RECEIVED THE CURRENT FORM; FOR A COMMENTARY ON THE ENTIRE BOOK, WITH EMPHASIS ON THE RHETORIC OF PROVERBS, SEE THE WONDERFUL WORK OF RICHARD J. CLIFFORD, *Proverbs* (Old Testament Library; Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1999); for a thorough verse-by-verse commentary on the book's introduction (chs. 1-9), emphasizing various parallels, such as between Proverbs and other Old Testament passages, or with Ancient Near Eastern texts, see, *inter alia*, the fine work of Michael V. Fox, *Proverbs 1-9* (Anchor Bible; New York: Doubleday, 2000); for the book's theology, see Lennart Boström, *The God of the Sages: The Portrayal of God in the Book of Proverbs* (Coniectanea Biblica: Old Testament Series 29; Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1990).

<sup>2</sup> The passage of Proverbs 8:22-31 is the earliest example of all the Old Testament texts where the Wisdom appears as a person. Earlier in the Ugaritic texts (fourteenth century B.C.), Wisdom is presented as an attribute of the god El. In spite of the hostile attitude of the prophets against the sages (Isa 5:21; Jer 8:9), beginning with the post-exilic times (after 539 B.C.), texts such Job 28; 38-39; Sirach 1:1-10 begin to describe God using Wisdom as an instrument in creating things, thus preparing the revolutionary idea of Proverbs 8 (composed around the fifth century B.C.) that Wisdom is a personal, co-eternal and co-creator with God. Texts as Proverbs 8 and Genesis 19:21 (the latter mentions 'two' Yahwehs, one in heaven and another speaking to Abraham on earth), though they could be mere literary conventions, nevertheless are quite mysterious within the monotheistic context of the Old Testament. However, these texts should be considered the precursors of the New Testament revelation of a plurality of Persons in God, the best example of such a revelation being the Prologue of John (John 1), where the Logos (another name for the Old Testament Wisdom) is one with God the Creator, yet still distinct from Him. We may add that a text such as 1 Corinthians 1:24, speaking of Christ as 'Wisdom of God,' may have contributed to equating Logos with Wisdom.

<sup>3</sup> In Niphal (passive) conjugation, the rendering of *nāsak* should be 'to be

poured out' or 'to be appointed/made leader' (by a libation).

<sup>4</sup> The Hebrew term for 'skill in technical matters, experience, shrewdness, wisdom,' *ḥokmā*, is a feminine noun (corresponding in gender to the Greek word *sōphia*), probably a loan-word from Phoenician. Out of all 140 of Old Testament instances, the word appears 32 times in the Book of Proverbs.

<sup>5</sup> Literally *mē-ʿōlām* means 'from what is hidden, concealed,' from the root *ʿ-l-m* 'to be concealed.'

<sup>6</sup> Literally *mē-rō(ʿ)* means 'from the head.'

<sup>7</sup> Literally *miq-qadmē ʾāreš* should be rendered, 'prior to the foundations of the earth.'

<sup>8</sup> Literally, *aporroia* means 'flowing off, stream.'

<sup>9</sup> The Book of Wisdom (called *Wisdom of Solomon* in Greek) was probably written in the second half of the first century B.C.; it seems to be the most recent of the books of the Old Testament.

<sup>10</sup> The Greek word *doxa* corresponds to the Hebrew term *kābôd* 'glory' deriving from a root *k-b-d* 'to be heavy'; hence the idea of 'heavy' (concrete) manifestations of God, such as natural phenomena (fire, smoke, wind, earthquake); for a list of these phenomena revealing God's power or 'glory,' see Exodus 19:16-25 and 1 Kings 19:9-18.

<sup>11</sup> The basic meaning of the verb *nāsak* is, as we saw above, 'to pour out,' and the Niphal form used in the MT is best translated as 'to be poured out' or 'to be consecrated leader' (with a libation).

<sup>12</sup> The divine statement in Psalm 2:7 ("You are my son, I have fathered you this day"), initially addressed to the king on Sion in the day of his coronation, came to allude to the historical birth of Messiah.

<sup>13</sup> We should add that Psalm 2:6 reads quite differently in the Masoretic Text than in the Septuagint. Specifically, as it is vocalized, the Masoretic Text of Psalm 2:6 reads, "I appointed my king on Mount Sion." However, in v. 6 God is speaking and in v. 7 the Messiah is speaking, and the transition in this textual context is quite cumbersome. With the assistance of the Septuagint, the pre-Masoretic textual tradition may be reconstructed by a simple modification of the vocalization. In MT the verbal root *n-s-k* is vocalized as a Qal (active conjugation) perfective form, *nāsaktî* 'I poured out (appointed),' while the Septuagint presupposes a *Vorlage* (an original Hebrew text) with a Niphal (passive conjugation) perfective form, *nissaktî*: 'I was poured out (appointed).' This is one good example of the Septuagint's preservation of the original reading, and thus it may help to reconstruct the pre-Masoretic stage of the Hebrew text.

<sup>14</sup> In Phoenician and Neo-Punic inscriptions, the root *\*q-n-y* (Hebrew *qānā*) designates 'to create, produce,' as in the phrase [*ʾl qn*] *ʾrš* "El, creator (possessor) of the earth." The Ugaritic verb *qny* means: (1) 'to ac-

quire, possess'; (2) 'to forge, plot'; (3) 'to create' (cf. *qnyt ilm* "[female] creator of gods" – an epithet of goddess Athirat). The Akkadian verb *qanûm* means 'to acquire, buy,' as in Eblaite personal names, e.g., Iqna (*iq-na* "[the god] acquired"). Here we might list other Semitic cognates: Syriac *qna* 'to acquire property'; Old South Arabic *qny* 'to acquire, to possess'; Ethiopic *qanaya* 'to acquire, buy'; Arabic *qana* 'to acquire' (rarely, 'to create').

<sup>15</sup> We should add that Hebrew *qānā* 'to acquire' is preferable to Greek *ktizō* 'to create,' because it preserves the parallelism of the members, a quite important device of Hebrew poetry. Thus, the meaning 'to acquire' of the verb *qānā* (v. 22) parallels quite well the meaning 'to give birth in great labor pains' of the verb *ḥ-w-l* (v. 24); in other words, the idea of birthing is closer to the idea of acquiring than to the idea of creating as promoted by the Septuagint reading (*ktizō*). Note that with the rare meaning of 'to create' the verb *qānā* appears only in Psalm 139:13. Note also that in Genesis 14:19b we have a phrase and imagery similar to that found in the Ugaritic texts, hence the rendition, "God, the creator (*qōnē*) of heaven and earth." But here we can propose a different translation, namely, "God, the possessor of heaven and earth."

<sup>16</sup> What Eve also meant to say, perhaps, is that the newborn child was not less than her, but rather equal to her, a human being (literally, *ʾîš* 'man') like her.

<sup>17</sup> Literally, his 'journey'; the word *derek* means 'way, road, journey, manner.' On the imagery of God setting out on a journey, see the parable of the evil tenants, Matthew 21:33, *apedēmēsen* "He [God] left (home) on a journey"; note that the word *rēʾšū* may also be rendered as complement, 'as the beginning.'

<sup>18</sup> The Polal conjugation means 'to be brought forth (through labor pains)' (cf. Ps 51:7; Job 15:7; Ps 8:24; 90:2).

<sup>19</sup> Hebrew has a common term for 'begetting' or 'giving birth,' namely, *yālad*.

<sup>20</sup> Literally, *tēhōmôt* 'depths' (cf. Prov 8:28), plural of *tēhōm* (Gen 1:2) which probably is to be related to the Akkadian word *tiamtum*, 'sea' or '(goddess) Tiamat.' Note that Tiamat, the mother-goddess, next to the god Apsu, is quite active in the Babylonian cosmogony, as recorded in the epic *Enuma elish*.

<sup>21</sup> The text is silent as to the way these came into being.

<sup>22</sup> I could not find a better word to convey what is difficult or perhaps impossible to convey, namely, that though powerful by attending the first moments of the creation recital, the 'deep' was only *permitted* (*allowed*) to keep on attending the historical journey of humankind.

<sup>23</sup> Isaiah 14:12-15 tells us in metaphoric language how Lucifer rebelled



against God and eventually how was he punished by being hurled into the 'pit (cistern).' Hebrew *bôr* 'pit (cistern)' is another term, besides *těhôm*, designating the primeval 'deep,' which through the free will of the rebellious Lucifer, came to be the *locus* of the fallen angels.

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**And the Word Became Flesh  
and  
Dwelt Among Us,  
Full of Grace and Truth**

**A Pastoral Letter on the  
Occasion of the Third Christian Millennium**

**The Hierarchs  
of the  
Standing Conference  
of the  
Canonical Orthodox Bishops  
in the Americas**



**And the Word became flesh and dwelt among  
us, full of grace and truth**

To all of the faithful clergy and laity of the  
Holy Orthodox Church throughout the Americas,

Beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

1. The commemoration of the 2000th anniversary of the birth of our Lord and God and Savior Jesus Christ is an occasion for celebration and joy for all Christians. It offers an opportunity to reflect upon God's love for us. "For it was neither an angel nor an ambassador" who came to us, "but the Lord Himself, made flesh."<sup>1</sup> God entered human history in the flesh, and history was and continues to be dramatically and irrevocably changed by the encounter.

2. The direct entrance of God into human history is one indication of His care for us and for the world He created. The Millennium celebrates the event that shows us history has a purpose. History has a beginning and an end, an Alpha and an Omega.

3. People long to know God. The search for meaning is as critical for human existence as are air and water. Creation itself, as the handiwork of God, points to Him. Yet, before the coming of Christ, the meaning of the world and our place in it remained difficult to understand. People created stories to help themselves explain the great mystery of their own existence, the world around them, and the One who was

responsible for bringing them into being. Yet, knowledge of the true God eluded them. The Holy Scriptures speak of this lack of knowledge as darkness. "So God sent messengers to speak for Him, holy men and women through whom He worked wonders, prophets to announce the coming salvation."<sup>2</sup> Finally, God sent His own Son, Jesus Christ. When He came, the very one who had created the world was now clearly made known to the world, giving light to those who had been sitting in darkness.<sup>3</sup>

4. If lack of true knowledge is darkness, then the darkness that had enveloped our ancestors in many ways still surrounds us. It takes a different form in our day. People have developed more sophisticated ways of avoiding God's call, while at the same time never being able to satisfy their deep desire to know Him. The existence of para-religious philosophies and movements, cults and sects, not to mention rampant materialism and secularism that seek to supplant religion, are indications that people's longing for God has not diminished. However, the cacophony of voices often-times make it difficult to hear and discern the true call.

5. As Bishops of the Church, we have been entrusted with the responsibility to teach the Word of God and to proclaim the truth of the Gospel. Therefore, on this great occasion of the dawn of the Third Christian Millennium, we address you, the faithful Orthodox Christians living in North America. We offer to you words of encouragement and hope. Our intention is to make the Gospel of our Lord and God and Savior Jesus Christ known and embraced by more and more people in this land to which God has called us.

6. We also invite all people of goodwill to listen to the Good News of salvation. Orthodox Christianity has a distinctive understanding of the Christian message that speaks profoundly to the need that people of our time have for knowledge of the true God. Because the Orthodox Church reaches back to the very foundations of Christianity, she has

an experience of the spiritual life that is deep and nuanced. Because the Orthodox Church is composed of millions of believers who struggle with the cares and responsibilities of life, she also knows of the particular challenges we face everyday.

7. In what follows, we want to retell for you the Good News of God's love for us, the people that He created, and the world that He made. It is a message that has changed the lives of countless millions. But mostly, it is a message that can change our lives, if we believe and live in Him and the Son He sent to save us.

### GOD'S PLAN FOR OUR SALVATION

*"Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited, but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness. And being found in human form, he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death – even death on a cross. Therefore God also highly exalted him and gave him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bend, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."* (Philippians 2:5-11)

8. The birth of Jesus Christ was an extraordinary event. We look back on it and, from the benefit of our historical perspective, are able to appreciate its significance. For those who participated in and witnessed His birth, its true importance was not immediately understood. Nevertheless, the Gospel records that each person who encountered this event knew that something unique and different was occurring in this birth.

9. The account of Jesus' birth begins with the appearance

of the Archangel Gabriel to a young virgin, Mary (cf. Luke 1:24-34). The angel tells her that she has found favor with God, and that she will conceive and bear a son. Mary is perplexed and awed by this news. She asks how this will happen. The angel tells her that it will be by the power of the Holy Spirit. As proof of his word, the angel tells Mary that her relative, Elizabeth, who had been unable to conceive, is now pregnant. Mary's immediate response is, "Behold, I am the servant of the Lord; let it be done to me according to your word."

10. A similar test of faith confronts Joseph, Mary's betrothed husband. When he discovers that she is with child, he is upset and resolves to "divorce her quietly" (cf. Matthew 1:18-25). However, an angel appears to him in a dream and tells him that "the child conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit," and that this son "will save his people from their sins." When he wakes from sleep, Joseph has a change of heart and "does as the angel of the Lord commanded him."

11. We are told of shepherds informed of the birth by angels (Luke 2:8-20) who go to see what has happened; of wise men who had seen a star in the sky announcing the birth of a king (Matthew 2:1-12); of an old man, Simeon, (Luke 2:25-38) who had been promised by the Holy Spirit that he would not die until he had seen the Lord's Messiah; and a prophetess, Anna, who was living in the Temple in her old age also waiting for the redemption of Jerusalem. Each of these people encountered this divine child and was forever changed by what they saw as God's presence among us, a dramatic sign of His loving concern for us. For her part, Mary "treasured all these things and pondered them in her heart" (Luke 2:19).

12. In one sense, starting to speak of God's love for us by recounting the birth of Jesus Christ is like beginning a story in the middle. The real beginning is in the creation of the world itself. Christians do not believe that the world's existence is



an “accident” of cosmic forces. We believe with our whole being that God created the world and everything in it out of His love. He had no need to create. But He desired to create beings who were free, and capable of sharing in His own glory. For us, the world and those in it are here according to His plan and for a purpose.

13. The birth of Jesus Christ and His life here on earth is the most dramatic example of God’s love for us. God, in Jesus, reached out to us, even when we were still distant and separated from Him as a result of our own actions (cf. Romans 5:8). He came and preached peace to those who were far off as well as to those who were near (cf. Ephesians 2:17). In the words of St. Athanasius, “He has united in peace those who hated each other ... and by His own love endured all things for our salvation.”<sup>4</sup> All that God asks in return is that we love Him with all our heart, soul and mind, and that we love our neighbor as we would love ourselves (cf. Matthew 22:37-40).

14. Our God is not remote. He is close and near. He makes Himself accessible to us. Even “though He was in the form of God,” our Lord Christ Jesus “did not count equality with God a thing to be exploited, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness” (Philippians 2:5-8). This self-emptying of God is the mark of His love for us. “When He saw us whom He had created with His own hands perishing, the Creator bowed the heavens and came down to us.”<sup>5</sup>

15. God did this for our salvation and the salvation of the whole world. We could give many different definitions and interpretations to the word “salvation.” Perhaps St. Athanasius sums it up best: “God became human so that we might become gods.... [Jesus] manifested Himself by a body that we might receive the idea of the unseen Father, and He endured shame from us so that we might inherit immortality.”<sup>6</sup> God, the second person of the Holy Trinity,

became one of us so that we could become one with God.

16. Salvation means that the world is not an end in and of itself. It is a reality that points to the larger reality of God's love for us and all that surrounds us. The world, time, history, our very lives are "an *epiphany* of God, a means of His revelation, presence and power."<sup>7</sup> This is a point to which we shall return. For the present we would like to emphasize this: God is not an idea or a device of our imagination, but a reality, a tri-personal reality. He has made Himself known to us directly and personally. Not only did the Triune God create the world, but God personally entered human history when the Word became flesh. God not only saves and loves all that is, He also saves and loves each and everyone of us.

17. God's action seeks a response on our part. As the Apostle James says, "Draw near to God and He will draw near to you" (James 4:8). The Epistle to the Hebrews adds, "Whoever would draw near to God must believe that He exists and that He rewards those who seek Him" (Hebrews 11:6). To some this scriptural verse might seem like a circular argument. If God were simply an idea, then indeed this would be the case. However, God calls us into a personal relationship with Him.

18. When we do not respond to God's love for us, we are diminished as human beings. The act of faith that He asks of us is not so very different from the faith and trust we place in those people who surround us. When we do not respond to the love given us by the people who love us, we become shallow and hardened individuals.

19. God's taking on of human nature, the Incarnation, is the concrete indication of His desire to be completely approachable. "The Word became flesh and dwelt among us," – literally, "pitched His tent" among us (John 1:14). God's desire was to engage us directly on our own level, and to travel with us on our human journey. In the poetry of the Church's hymns: "The Virgin gives birth to Him who is

above being, and the earth offers a cave to Him whom no one can approach.”<sup>8</sup> These are human words trying to describe something that is beyond human comprehension: the person Jesus Christ is actually God with us in the flesh. This is who the early Christians who first encountered Jesus understood Him to be. Believing in Him and experiencing Him in our lives, this is who we understand Him to be.

20. Orthodox Christians have consistently affirmed the inherent dignity and value of every human person, because each is created “in the image and likeness of God” (Genesis 1:26). This dignity is expressed not only in our creation but also through the coming of Christ. With the Incarnation, divinity was united to our humanity in the person of Christ. Through this act of divine love, our humanity was profoundly enriched and transfigured. Through His words and actions, Christ revealed to us the Father who calls us to be His children. He gave to us the Spirit who enlivens us and bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God (cf. Romans 8:16). Christ’s coming revealed that each of us belongs to God.

21. Our human dignity and value are rooted ultimately in God and His love for each of us. Our dignity and value are not dependent upon our stage of development, our race, our gender, our social status, our education, our mental or physical abilities, our age, our income or even our religious beliefs. We are each of supreme value simply because we belong to God. He is our Maker.

22. Jesus clearly affirmed the inherent value of each person when He lifted up those who were considered the marginalized of His day. He encountered, welcomed, ate with and healed people. Among these were people with disabilities, outcasts, poor and sinners. Our Lord affirmed the fundamental dignity of each. In inviting them to follow Him, our Lord revealed the truth of their identity as God’s sons and daughters.

23. Christ’s actions and words of love frequently ran

contrary to the religious laws and social customs of the time. His affirmation of the dignity and value of each person often clashed with the views of the leaders of the day who had little regard for those considered to be “the least” members of the community. Our Lord affirmed the worth of each person by identifying Himself with the needy, especially “the least” among us (Matthew 25:45).

24. The Incarnation has another important implication, especially for those who struggle to understand the relationship between the physical and the spiritual. The Orthodox Church has always presupposed the intrinsic goodness of matter. The Church understands this based on the account of creation found in Genesis. “And God saw everything that He had made, and behold, it was very good” (Genesis 1:31). The Holy Scriptures openly declare the wonder of God’s creation (cf. Psalm 104). But in the Incarnation something even more profound took place. Matter – human flesh and blood – became the dwelling place of God Himself.

25. We see this theological affirmation at work in the worship of the Church. The Orthodox Church is perhaps best known for the holy images – the icons – it employs in its worship. For us, the icon is not merely art or decoration. It expresses our understanding of the implications of God’s decision to take on our nature. When He took on our flesh and blood He not only showed that creation “is good,” but also revealed that matter is holy, that the divinity could dwell in it. This is a radically different understanding of the relationship between the spiritual and the material than we normally see in post-Enlightenment thought. Where other philosophies see a tension or even a mutual exclusivity between matter and spirit, body and soul, we see the potential for harmony and transfiguration.

26. Consequently, when we hear the words of the Apostle that our Lord Jesus Christ “is the image of the invisible God, the first-born of all creation; ... [that] He is before all things

and in Him all things hold together" (Colossians 1:15,17), we understand this to refer to Him as both the One who creates and the One who transfigures all that we see and do not see. Moreover, we understand matter itself as that which points us toward God.

27. Another concrete way in which this theological understanding is shown is in the Orthodox Church's concern for the environment. This is not a new concern. Orthodox liturgy and prayer are replete with references to God's creation. We bless the fruits of the earth and the waters of river and sea. The bread and wine, offered by faithful Christians, that God changes into the very Body and Blood of our Lord, is the most powerful sign we have that matter can be a means of sanctification. We, human beings, are composed of matter and spirit. God created us to be mediators between the visible and invisible worlds. So, we are charged to be stewards of the earth while we offer back to God the creation which He first offered to us.

28. In addition to giving us a clearer understanding of the relationship between the spiritual and material aspects of creation, the Incarnation also reveals God's plan for the world. As Christians we remember that we were created not just as part of God's plan, but as central to it. The original word used in the Holy Scriptures for this plan is "economy." The earliest Christian preachers spoke about the Divine Economy or the Economy of our Salvation. By this they meant first and foremost the Incarnation; but in a larger sense they also spoke about the entire plan God had laid out for us and for the world, even before the foundation of the world.

29. Economy is derived from a composite Greek word meaning the "management of a household." It can also mean, in the same sense, "stewardship." Today we use the word almost exclusively to refer to the management of material affairs; for example, we speak of the national economy, or micro- and macro-economics. However, the financial and

material organization of a nation has as much to do with its cultural and spiritual climate as it has to do with material resources. Nonetheless, it would be useful to keep our current understanding of that word in mind as we talk about God's economy: the way He decided to 'manage' His 'household.'

30. As we read in the Letter to the Ephesians, God "destined us in love to be His children through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of His will" (Ephesians 1:5). In order for us to know His plan, God spoke "in many and various ways ... to our fathers by the prophets; but in these last days He has spoken to us by a Son" (Hebrews 1:1-2). Orthodox Christians believe that when God created us, He implanted within each one of us the desire and need to know Him. This need is so basic to our nature that we could liken it to our need for food and drink or to our need for human companionship. So, God reached out to us through prophets and holy people. Finally He sent His Son "whom He appointed the heir of all things, through whom also He created the world" (Hebrews 1:2).

31. The coming of our Lord Jesus Christ into the world was the culmination, the apex of God's economy. Again, St. Paul tells us that God "has made known to us in all wisdom and insight the mystery of His will, according to His purpose which He set forth in Christ as a plan for the fullness of time, to sum up all things in Him, things in heaven and things on earth" (Ephesians 1:9-10). This phrase, the "fullness of time" is used in the Holy Scriptures to signal that Christ is the center of time as well as the total expression of the Father's will, of His plan for us. Jesus, in a very real sense, sums up or recapitulates everything that came before Him, as well as all that comes after Him. God's plan is made known in Him.

32. The Good News is that not only is this plan now revealed for us to understand but even to join as participants. The fulfillment of time has not terminated with the Incarnation of Christ the Word (Logos) of God. The work of the Incarnate Word (John 1:1) continues to the end of the ages. Time is

fulfilled by the coming of Jesus into history, but in a greater sense, time is fulfilled by the degree to which humanity is more and more penetrated by the Incarnate Word. Our cooperation with God's plan makes Christ more and more present in humanity, even in ways that we might not be able to perceive.<sup>9</sup> This is God's purpose for us. We participate in Christ in the re-creation of the world.

33. St. Paul talks about this Economy or Plan of Salvation in two different ways. In his letter to the Ephesians (1:10) he tells us that Christ has "summed up" or united this whole plan in Himself. His saving work reveals the totality of God's plan for us. He also speaks of the "working out" of our salvation (cf. Philippians 2:12) – the long view of God's plan. St. John Chrysostom<sup>10</sup> sees in these two ways of looking at God's plan a path for us to participate in the unfolding of history. Our work – both personally and communally – is directed toward one purpose: that God's "will be done on earth as it is in heaven" (Matthew 6:10).

34. Historically, Orthodox Christianity has resisted the temptation to view this participation in largely individualistic terms. The first followers of Jesus were not isolated individuals engaged in their private quest for truth. They were Israelites – members of an established and instituted community of the "Chosen People" of God.<sup>11</sup> As Christians we now participate in this community, now centered upon the coming of Christ, the Messiah. St. Peter tells the earliest Christians that, "You are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people.... Once you were not a people but now you are God's people" (1 Peter 2:2-10).

35. The plan of salvation revealed and actualized in Jesus Christ makes membership in the "holy nation" available to all people. In Christ, God adopts us as His sons and daughters. "See what love the Father has given us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are" (1 John 3:1). This message that Christ brought into the world is Good News.

\* \* \*

*God pours himself out in an ecstasy of love. He does not remain in the heavens and call to himself the servant he loves. No, he himself descends and searches out for such a servant, and comes near, and lets his love be seen, as he seeks what is like himself. From those who despise him, he does not depart. He shows no anger towards those who defy him but follows them to their very doors, and endures all things, and even dies, in order to demonstrate his love. All this is true, but we have not declared the highest thing of all. For not merely does God enter into close fellowship with his servants and extend to them his hand, but he has given himself wholly to us so that we have become temples of the living God and our members are the members of Christ. The head of these members is worshipped by the cherubim, and these hands and feet are joined to that heart.*

St. Nicholas Cabasilas

*On the Divine Liturgy, 2:132*

### THE SIN THAT SEPARATES US FROM GOD

*“If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just and will forgive our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” (1 John 1:8-9)*

36. Just before the Lord was crucified, there was an incident that occurred between Christ and the Pharisees that illustrates how one can distort spiritual priorities. While teaching in the Temple, Jesus was questioned and provoked by the Pharisees as they tried to trap Him in His own words. Finally, He began to point out in very powerful language the discrepancy between what they considered to be righteous behavior, and what God had intended when He revealed His



truth to them. At one point, Jesus turns to them and says: "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you tithe mint and dill and cumin, and have neglected the weightier matters of the law, justice and mercy and faith; these you ought to have done, without neglecting the others. You blind guides, straining out a gnat and swallowing a camel!" (Matthew 23:23-24)

37. If we look at ourselves carefully and honestly, this is what most of us do as well. We strain out 'gnats,' considering ourselves righteous, and swallow whole 'camels' without even blinking an eye. The Lord is making the same point when He refers to the speck in our brother's eye and the log in our own (cf. Matthew 7:1-6). This is why the great spiritual teachers of the Church have always taught that we should focus on our own sin, leaving other people's sin to God's judgment. The temptation to judge others, about which the Lord warns us, is as great today as it was when He walked the earth. It will be as real tomorrow as it was when Adam blamed Eve for giving him the forbidden fruit (cf. Genesis 3:12). It is always easier to see another's fault than one's own.

38. Perhaps one of the more curious aspects of contemporary American society is its understanding of sin. The action of sin is not new, but American society's understanding of it may be. Most people do not believe that they are actually sinning. Notice how the word sin itself has almost disappeared from our vocabulary. Even in church many people are uncomfortable when the word 'sin' appears in a sermon or a hymn. Moreover, when the word is actually used, as we can see in the national debates on 'declining morality,' it is used in an accusatory manner. This is a very serious problem, because it is very difficult to talk about the spiritual life without also talking about sin.

39. The best place in which to begin this discussion is with a solid definition. The Greek word for sin is "*amartia*." It

literally means “missing the mark,” as in archery or darts. You shoot the arrow and you miss the bull’s-eye, sometimes by more and sometimes by less. The more experienced and skilled you become, the more often you hit the mark. While this metaphor may not be perfect, it is still a useful image to keep in mind.

40. Our first question should be: “What is the mark?” What exactly are we aiming for? The short answer is that we are to strive to be everything that God expects us to be, to truly reflect the image and likeness of God. Striving for holiness is not becoming something other than ourselves. It is precisely becoming ourselves, becoming authentic. Sin takes us further away from the 'mark' and as a consequence we become something less than ourselves.

41. Throughout this letter we will speak about the salvation that God has offered us in the person of our Lord Jesus Christ. But 'salvation' can be an abstract concept and difficult to grasp. It can become very real and personal if we see how in moving toward holiness our lives can be rescued. While salvation truly is cosmic in its scope, we actually see and realize its possibilities in us as we turn toward God.

42. When we become awakened to this new and different way of looking at our existence, we feel the distance between ourselves and God. This is another useful way of looking at sin. The difference between who we are and who we should be, the separation between us and God, is a reflection of sin. We engage in this self-reflection not to evoke guilt – although any person who becomes aware of this dimension would find it impossible not to feel guilty about any number of things. Rather, without acknowledging the distance between us and God, it is impossible to change. And we all need to change, because we all sin.

43. There are some who have suggested an interesting way of addressing the peculiarly modern struggle with guilt. They make a distinction between appropriate and inappropriate

guilt. The contention is that most of us, having confused the two, spend a great deal of energy feeling guilty for things that are either out of our control or simply social convention, while we spend little energy feeling guilty over things for which we should be truly sorry. We become preoccupied with behavior that other people will see, while worrying very little about the things that God considers vital. Of course, there is a relationship between the two – especially if holiness is the mark.

44. We have witnessed recently the development of another curious (and one might even say bizarre) phenomenon regarding sin and confession. We refer to the television and radio talk shows where people admit their darkest and most intimate secrets to the entire world. Listening are millions of people who, instead of being embarrassed by this public display, tune in to be titillated. We certainly will not pretend that we can fully understand this phenomenon. That people take delight in the sins and sufferings of others is not new. But how can one explain a person who would be loath to go to a priest to be forgiven his or her sins in the sanctity of Confession, but feels no compunction to share this sin in front of the listening audience?

45. There is something at work here that we should notice. The need to have the burden of our sins lifted has not disappeared simply because we have stopped talking about it. Some have observed that while confession has declined, visits to psychological therapists have skyrocketed. Self-help manuals abound on every topic imaginable. People's desire to be in harmony with God has not lessened, even as they struggle to understand the anguish that they cannot bring themselves to call sin.

46. It requires a certain strength to recognize how we have distanced ourselves from God. In popular thinking, however, the self-confident or self-assured persons are the strong ones. They are the ones who can "make things happen," by ordering and controlling their lives for their own benefit.

More than likely you know that spiritual wisdom has always called this pride or arrogance. St. Maximos the Confessor says that pride and arrogance come from two kinds of ignorance, namely ignorance of divine help and human weakness.<sup>12</sup> This attitude is the source of all separation from God. Our society places a high value on self-confidence. Yet, the further we move away from God, the more we need to assert our self-reliance. This is not accidental. There is an inverse correlation between prideful self-assurance and separation and alienation from God.

47. Humility, which contrasts with pride, is a posture of thankfulness. It also leads to a habit of examining our own conscience. Inexperience in the spiritual life may lead us to confuse humility with weakness or lack of conviction. But this is a misunderstanding. Nikitas Stithatos reminds us that “we humans look at outward forms, but God looks on the heart.”<sup>13</sup> How many examples could we cite even in our own time of powerful people who have been brought down by their own arrogant sense of invulnerability? “Know yourself,” Nikitas continues, “this is true humility, the humility that teaches us to be inwardly humble and makes our heart contrite.” The arrogant heart is deaf and insensitive – above all to God, but also to other people. It sees people as things, and abuses creation as if it were its alone.

48. This is a particular challenge for us who are citizens of the wealthiest and most powerful nation in the world. We have always felt that we have been particularly blessed and called by God. We have much for which to be grateful. As a people, we have oftentimes shown our gratitude to God by our generosity to our neighbors, the ones next door as well as the ones across the oceans. However, this sense of being ‘blessed,’ if not accompanied by a humble and gentle heart (cf. Psalms 51:17), can lead not only to self-destruction, but also to the abuse and destruction of others.

49. We are renewed by being certain of God’s love for us.

We began this section by talking about the difficulty modern America has in speaking about sin. We suspect that one of the reasons for this is that people are not sure of God's love and forgiveness. We have fallen into a terrible cycle. Having grown further away from God, we feel His presence in our life less and less. Rather than turning back to Him, we try to make it on our own. We live with the delusion that the soul's persistent longing for God can be otherwise satisfied. But the emptiness does not go away, because nothing can substitute for God's love. St. Paul reminds us, "Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind" (Romans 12:2).

50. Rather than address the root cause of sin, we simply seek ways of alleviating our pangs of conscience. St. Maximos the Confessor speaks about this syndrome as the pleasure/pain cycle related to sin. The consequences of sin usually cause a degree of pain – sometimes physical, but usually spiritual. The methods we seek to ameliorate the discomfort often involve the same sort of behavior that initially caused our pain. Rather than cutting to the heart of the problem, we exacerbate it. St. John of Damascus states the question a little more existentially when he asks: "What earthly pleasure is untainted by grief?"<sup>14</sup> There is a spiritual principle here that we can see at work in the world around us.

51. Two examples from our daily lives might help to illustrate. Many of today's environmental problems have as their root cause the mitigation of "pain," or at least discomfort. The planet is warming because of the excessive use of carbon-based fuels. As the climate gets warmer, we turn up the air conditioning to cool off. But in order to run the air conditioners we need to burn more fuel, which in turn heats up the planet.

52. Again, we feel that our lives are getting more and more busy. We recognize that the most important things in life are our relationships with family and friends. We sense that there

is something missing in our lives. So we engage in more 'personal' activities. We enroll our children in more extra-curricular programs. These activities, instead of enriching our lives, cause us to feel all the more detached. We spend even less time with the ones we love.

53. These small, even mundane examples point to a greater truth. If we want our environment to be preserved, we personally need to choose how we will consume. If we value our family relationships, we personally need to choose how we will spend our time. If we desire spiritual well-being, we personally must change our hearts.

54. God is calling us constantly, even when we are deaf to his call. At some point, we must become keenly aware of this call and awaken from our spiritual slumber. This awakening is repentance. It means to heed God's call and to have a radical change of heart. This involves a movement of our soul toward God. St. James tells us, "Draw near to God and He will draw near to you" (James 4:8). We can rededicate ourselves to God if we allow Him to show us His unfailing love. This enables us to pick ourselves up, no matter how many times we might fall; or to shoot as many arrows as we may need until we are able to hit the mark. The Apostle reminds us that God, "out of the great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead through our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ" (Ephesians 2:4-5).

55. One of the most sublime aspects of Christian theology is how our Lord redeemed us by His suffering and death on the Cross. We cannot make any claim at being exhaustive here. However, we would ask you to reflect on this. God knows our nature. Were He to confront us directly with our sin, we would react by justifying ourselves and hardening our hearts. (Have you ever noticed what children do when they are admonished?) What, then, does God choose to do? He becomes one of us. He lives with us. He works with us. He teaches and heals us. And finally He becomes the object of

our jealousy and hatred. He takes all of this on Himself, even to the point of death, so that in watching Him outstretched on the Cross, dying, our hearts will melt and we might repent.

56. When we recognize our own sin then we can appreciate “the Father of mercies ... who comforts us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction” (2 Corinthians 1:3-4). Knowing that God loves us and forgives us allows us to “love one another, since love covers a multitude of sins” (1 Peter 4:8).

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*How is it possible for sin and grace to dwell in the same heart, as if there were two different hearts? The illustration of a fire may help. If you have a fire below a vessel and you put some wood on it, the fire flares up and the water in the vessel heats up and boils. But if you fail to put more wood on the fire it begins to fade gradually and goes out. In our hearts is the heavenly fire of grace. If we pray and meditate on the love of Christ, we add wood to the fire and our hearts burn with longing for God. If, on the contrary, we are negligent and give our attention to worldly affairs, vice enters the heart, takes it over and torments us. Nevertheless, the heart remembers the peace which it tasted earlier and begins to repent, to direct itself afresh towards God. On the one hand, then, peace is brought nearer, on the other, we are seeking it fervently in prayer. It is like stirring the fire which is warming the heart. The vessel of the heart is very deep, so deep that the Bible says God searches the abyss of it. If a person deviates from the way of God's commandments, he puts himself under the power of sin. And because the heart is a deep abyss, sin goes right down into it in order to take over its territory. So it is necessary for grace also, slowly, to descend to those depths.*

St. Macarius

Homily 40, 7ff. (PG34, 765ff.)

## THE JOY OF OUR WITNESS

*“Go therefore and make disciples of all nations ... teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you.” (Matthew 28:19-20)*

57. The fundamental impulse of the Church is to share the Good News. The Lord Himself charged His Apostles to preach the Gospel everywhere. Both “apostle” and “mission” have the same root meaning: “to be sent.” The Apostles were first and foremost missionaries. The Church is both the product of and agent for the proclamation of the Gospel. We who believe today are both the result of their mission and agents charged with sharing this Good News with others. The energy that drives this impulse is the same joy that the Apostles had: the experience of knowing Christ our Lord, risen from the dead.

58. Personal witness and personal experience form the basis of mission. St. Paul lays out the basic rationale and methodology of mission. He says, “But how are they to call upon Him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in Him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without a preacher? And how can they preach unless they are sent? As it is written, ‘How beautiful are the feet of those who preach good news!’... So faith comes from what is heard, and what is heard comes by the preaching of Christ” (Romans 10:14-17).

59. When said like this, it becomes so simple and obvious. Without us, the Gospel would not be preached. God designed it this way. There needs to be person-to-person contact for the Good News to be transmitted. We trace our lineage through the millennia to the Apostles themselves. But each person in that line was told the story and believed, and believing shared his or her joy with someone else. We could cite many examples, but we will choose just one.



60. Following the Lord's Resurrection and the descent of the Holy Spirit on the Apostles, Philip was led by an angel to go to Gaza. There he met an Ethiopian who happened to be a high-ranking official in the court of Candace the Queen of Ethiopia. He had been worshiping in Jerusalem. His heart was open. He was already searching for God. Philip found him reading from the book of Isaiah and asked him if he understood what he was reading. The Ethiopian said to Philip, "How can I, unless someone guides me?" Philip took the opportunity and told him of Jesus – His life, death and resurrection, and the salvation offered to all in His name. The Ethiopian believed and was baptized! The Holy Scriptures record that his response was one of going forth in joy (cf. Acts 8:26-40).

61. We speak of the Church as being Apostolic and Catholic. The first meaning of "Apostolic" is that the Church is in the line of the Apostles. However, Apostolic also means to proclaim the Gospel actively to everyone that we might encounter. It means that we, like Philip, are sent into the world. Moreover, when we refer to the Church as Catholic we mean that the proclamation of the Good News belongs to all people and to all times.

62. At the urging of Philip and as a result of his own joy, this man from Ethiopia felt compelled to proclaim Christ and to share the Good News with everyone around him. From this one encounter on the road to Gaza, a whole nation became Christian. From the power of God that manifests itself when the Gospel story is told, peoples' lives can be and are changed. We should never discount the chance meeting or the odd question. We can never predict when God will present us with an opportunity to witness to our joy in Him.

63. Therefore, do not be ashamed of the Gospel, because, "it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who has faith... For in it the righteousness of God is revealed through faith for faith; as it is written, 'He who through faith is righteous

shall live” (Romans 1:16-17). Our willingness to witness to the Gospel by our words and actions reveals the power of God to those around us. We speak the words that are lodged in our hearts, words that have become for us living water.

64. Mission should not to be reduced to words alone. Mission implies care for the whole human person. It means reaching out to everyone around us. The Gospel is for all people. Reaching out may also require that we think through our preconceptions of whom our particular parish is meant to serve. These may not be just the people of our own ethnic, social or economic group. In some places it may mean selflessly serving an inner-city neighborhood in which we find ourselves. Regardless of where we are, our neighbors should be able to recognize the richness of our faith by the way we live and serve others.

65. Mission is first and foremost a person-to-person encounter. It requires that we engage the person in front of us in a real and genuine way, being as open to that person as we would like for him or her to be with us. In the name of Christ, we put ourselves on the line, becoming transparent to others so that Christ can work through us. Mission thus causes as much change in us as it does in the person to whom we announce the Good News.

66. Mission means action. St. James counsels us: “Be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves” (James 1:22). When our Lord encountered people, He addressed actual, physical needs they had. He healed the sick, fed the hungry, comforted the despondent, and raised the dead. It was through His ministry to their physical needs that they knew His love and concern. Fundamentally, we are psychosomatic beings, that is, we are composed of both matter and spirit. We have both physical needs and spiritual longings. It is difficult, if not impossible, to hear the Good News of salvation if one’s stomach is empty. If one is sick or even dying, how can one know the love of God, if someone

does not come and minister to one's pain? Our preaching is hollow if it is not accompanied by concrete actions.

67. Our Lord said, "You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hid. Nor does one light a lamp and put it under a bushel, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house. Let your light so shine before people, that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven" (Matthew 5:14-16). Jesus put in plain words the relationship between the proclamation of the Gospel, our own good works, and the willingness of people to worship the true God as a consequence. How are people to know the power of God if we who claim to believe do not act any differently than those who make no such claim? Or, as St. John says, "If anyone says, 'I love God,' and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his , whom he has seen, cannot love God whom he has not seen" (1 John 4:20).

68. One of the distinctive characteristics of Orthodox Christian thinking is that it sees the Gospel message not as law, but as relationship. We speak of the mystery of the Holy Trinity – Father, Son and Holy Spirit – in terms of the relationship of love that exists among them. We speak of the "economy" or plan of salvation in terms of the desire of God to heal the relationship between us and Him that we damaged through sin. We see in the example of our Lord the way in which He reached out to those who were separated from God. He ate with publicans, welcomed harlots and consoled thieves, even while on the Cross. The missionary principle of the Orthodox Church is to meet people where they are, on their own terms, in order to show them how much more they can become through the love of God.

69. Practically speaking, how does one do this? We have many examples in the holy men and women who have preceded us. St. Isaac the Syrian describes the compassionate heart of the person of true faith: "What can one say of a soul,

of a heart, filled with compassion? It is a heart which burns with love for every creature: for human beings, birds and animals, for serpents and for demons. The thought of them and the sight of them make the tears of the saint flow. And this immense and intense compassion, which flows from the heart of the saints, makes them unable to bear the sight of the smallest, most insignificant wound in any creature. Thus they pray ceaselessly, with tears, even for animals, for enemies of the truth and for those who do them wrong.”<sup>15</sup>

70. The primary witness we can offer to one another is the holiness of our life. This testifies to the truth of the Gospel’s message in a way nothing else can. The heart of the spiritual person is open to the pain of others. Such persons have become transparent love, having left their own egoism behind. The spiritual person ascribes infinite value to the most unassuming of persons, because the Son of God Himself, in becoming incarnate, gave this infinite value to every person. At the same time, the example of humility offered by the holy person humbles the pride of others, in this way constantly reaffirming the God-based equality between people.<sup>16</sup>

71. The greatest gift we have to offer our nation is the rich spiritual tradition of Orthodox Christianity. This tradition is grounded in the real difficulties presented by life, but it also points to a way in which we might understand and transcend these difficulties. It is a profound commentary on human psychology and behavior, and also shows how we might overcome the demons that tempt our souls. It presents the world we see around us as real and good, while lifting us up to another, even more glorious reality.

72. One of the most effective missionary tools we have is the worship of our Church, especially the Divine Liturgy, the Eucharist. In Eastern Europe and the Middle East, during the 400 years of Ottoman Turkish rule, the liturgy was one of the primary methods of preserving and proclaiming the faith. People who were illiterate learned the Holy Scriptures

and teachings of our faith by listening to the readings and hymns of the services. During the over 70 years of Communist persecution in Russia, Ukraine and Belarus, and the over 50 years in the other nations of Eastern Europe, our Christian faith was literally saved by the liturgy. When it was impossible, on pain of imprisonment and even death, to preach the Gospel, the Word of God was made known through the liturgy. Countless martyrs were educated in the school of faith, love and joy that is the Divine Liturgy. The suffering and death accepted for Christ by the hundreds of thousands of Orthodox Christians was a true “martyria,” a true witness to the death and resurrection of Christ.

73. In this country we have a different challenge. Among the forms of 'persecution' that we face is complacency and self-satisfaction. We must pay careful attention to the way in which we conduct worship, and especially the Divine Liturgy. The Eucharist is the summing up of the whole reality of the salvation of the world. The Church of Christ gathers to remember the saving acts of God so that she can become the agent for the transformation of the world. In the Divine Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom we ask that the Holy Spirit come down upon us and upon the Gifts. We must take care that the celebration does not become a mechanistic ritual, but remains a living action, an active prayer of the entire assembly that at once changes both us and all those around us.

74. We who participate in the Divine Liturgy know of its power to transform. Many have had the experience of inviting a friend or family member who may not be Orthodox to attend the Divine Liturgy. We know how people sense, upon entering an Orthodox Church, that this is a different and special space – the “heaven on earth” experienced in Constantinople in A.D. 988 by the ambassadors of Vladimir, the Prince of Kiev, in his search for a faith for his people. Yet have we used this missionary gift to its fullest potential?

75. Often the liturgy is celebrated in a language that is not understood by all. And even when the language may not be an impediment, the indifferent manner in which the liturgy is sometime celebrated serves to distance rather than draw us near to God. We must not make Orthodoxy exotic. It should be approachable and accessible. The liturgy is the action of the people; people should be drawn into this action. The liturgy is the action of the Body of Christ; it should build the holy community that is the Church. In the Divine Liturgy, there are no spectators, only active participants. When celebrated carefully, with faith and with love, God's transforming power can be felt by all.

76. This transfiguring power of the Liturgy also requires us to act. Recently some have begun to speak of the "Liturgy after the Liturgy." This means that the spiritual work of the Divine Liturgy must continue even as we leave the Church. As we are changed, so must we work for that change within the society around us. As we are sanctified, so we are charged with bringing this sanctification into the world.

77. From the very foundation of Christianity the Church always concerned herself with the well-being of the most vulnerable. The Greek word "*philanthropos*" – from which we take the English words "philanthropist" and "philanthropic" – originally was a title attributed only to God, because He alone is the one who truly loves humanity. Gradually, those people who reflected God's loving compassion for us, for the weakest among us, also came to be known as "philanthropists." To be philanthropic is more than to give money to a charity; although it *is* that, too. It is to become loving and compassionate, especially to the least among us, in the same way God is loving and compassionate to us.

78. Through our words and through our actions, we must show the world the liturgy that brings heaven to earth, so that earth can be brought to heaven.

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*“You are the salt of the earth.” The Word is entrusted to you, Christ says, not for your life but for the whole world. Nor am I sending you to two cities, or ten or twenty, nor to one people, as I once sent the prophets, but over land and sea, to the whole world, a world in very evil condition. For when he said, “you are the salt of the earth,” he showed that all human nature was rendered unsavory and corrupt by sin. Therefore, he looks for those virtues in them principally which are the more necessary and useful for taking care of the many. The person who is gentle, modest, merciful, and just does not shut up his good works in himself, but is concerned that those fair springs should flow for the benefit of others. Again, the one who is pure of heart, and a peacemaker, who feels the urge for truth – such a person orders his life for the benefit of all.*

St. John Chrysostom

Homily on the Gospel of Matthew, 15,6

## PREACHING THE GOSPEL IN A PLURALISTIC SOCIETY

*“And there appeared to them tongues as of fire, distributed and resting on each one of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages, as the Spirit gave them utterance.” (Acts 2:3-4)*

79. One of the unique qualities of the modern era is that the average person in many parts of the world encounters a degree of diversity – cultural, philosophical and religious – unprecedented in human history. Even a hundred years ago, a given people usually remained in a specific place. When you journeyed there, you expected to encounter the culture, religion, and language of the people of that region. Travel

was difficult and visitors few. This contrasts sharply with our own experience, when travel is easy, communication instantaneous. Most major cities number as citizens people from all over the world. Although encountering people with worldviews different from our own can be enriching, it can also cause tension and conflict. We see this on the world stage just as we see this in our own neighborhoods. How can we be one human people while still preserving what is unique about each of us? This question has been the Church's concern from the beginning, but it takes on a new urgency in our own time.

80. The Church has used two biblical events to illustrate this tension, even as she has tried to understand how to overcome it. The first is the story of the Tower of Babel (Genesis 11:1-9), and the second is the account of the Holy Spirit's descending on the Apostles on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:1-13).

81. In Genesis we read that in the beginning everyone spoke one language. This enabled people to begin to build a tower "with its top in the heavens." They said that they wanted to "make a name" for themselves. The problem was not that they were cooperating, it was how they were cooperating. Their cooperation led them to believe arrogantly that they could challenge God. Seeing how their arrogance was bringing them to evil purpose, God "confused their language, that they may not understand one another's speech." Unable to communicate with each other, they scattered throughout the world, abandoning their tower.

82. The Holy Spirit's action at Pentecost is the antithesis of Babel. After the Lord's Ascension, the Disciples remained in Jerusalem waiting for the Holy Spirit, just as Jesus had directed them. On the day of Pentecost they were gathered together in the upper room. There came the "rush of a mighty wind" and "tongues of fire distributed and rested on each of them." "They were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began



to speak in other languages.” Because it was a great feast, people from all over the world had gathered in Jerusalem. Hearing the sound of the wind, a great number came to find out what was happening. When the Disciples began speaking to them, “each one heard them in his own language.”

83. The Tower of Babel divided humanity. The Holy Spirit restored that unity on the day of Pentecost. However, the unity which we have in the Holy Spirit is different from the pre-Babel unity in one very important respect. The unity of Babel was predicated on a uniformity of language and, one can presume, culture. The unity which the Holy Spirit brings preserves our particular and distinctive characteristics. It is a unity in diversity and a diversity in unity. The Orthodox Church has always used this Pentecost event as a way to understand how diverse people can be one in Christ. Historically, unity of faith has not necessitated one language or even one uniform practice for the entire Church. Sharing one faith, we can be one Church, even as we acknowledge our ethnic and cultural diversity. The question is, what are the limits to diversity? When does difference in practice become difference in faith?

84. The first experience that the Church had with this tension was at the Apostolic Council held in Jerusalem in A.D. 49 (Acts 15:1-29). The Apostles had to decide whether or not the non-Jewish converts to Christianity had to adhere to Jewish law. These new converts challenged the Jewish Apostles to think about what was central to the Christian faith. After much prayer, deliberation and struggle, the Apostles decided that faith in Christ did not require these Gentiles to become Jews. It was a decisive moment for the Church. The Apostles made a distinction between faith and practical expressions of the faith. They also recognized that as Christianity moved away from its Semitic milieu, it was going to confront a different worldview.<sup>18</sup>

85. The problem for the Apostles and those first Christians

was not simply preaching monotheism to a polytheistic world. It was to make a Gospel, that presupposed very different categories, relevant to a culture that was in many ways hostile to the Christian worldview. The debates surrounding the Ecumenical Councils and other local councils of the Patristic period testify to the fact that the process of 'inculturating' the Gospel – that is, showing how the Gospel speaks to the issues relevant to a particular people, time and culture – was not an easy task.

86. For example, the ancient world placed a high degree of importance on unity or even uniformity. Individuality was to be subordinated to the good of the whole or the group. This is the perennial tension between the 'one' and the 'many'; in the language of our day, unity and diversity. In contrast, the Gospel placed a unique importance on each person. The Church found the evidence for this in the Incarnation of the Word who desired to save both the world and, most importantly, each individual soul.

87. A related difficulty that the Church encountered was the way in which many in the ancient world conceived of history. Many saw history as a series of repeating cycles. Consequently, much Greek philosophical thinking was consumed with discussing the beginning of things. For them, the result of any action was simply the consequence of the initial 'seed.' Nothing could alter it. The Gospel saw the world very differently. History was of supreme consequence. We were not subject to the inevitability of our destiny. The world had a beginning, but more importantly it would have an end. God had entered history to alter its direction decisively. The modern world has become absorbed with history – look at the importance we give to 'facts' as 'impartial' arbiters of the truth – without giving much thought to the direction and purpose of our history.

88. The Christian experience of the Godhead as a tri-personal reality sharing a singular essence turned this

argument on its head. The Christian belief that God took on human nature to transform history and creation directly challenged preconceived assumptions about history, human beings, God, and the integrity and inviolability of a particular essence (i.e., if you are a human being you cannot be God; if you are God, you cannot be a human being). At every point and in almost every way, the Christian message began to change the way the Greek and Roman world thought. These questions were more than simply relevant or valid to people of the time. They saw them as vital. Everyone – the Church Fathers, the intellectuals, the pagans, the workers on the street – saw these questions as central to their existence.

89. We should also remember that the persons who were raising these questions on behalf of the Church were themselves a part of the intellectual life of their time. St. Basil the Great was trained in philosophy in Athens. St. John Chrysostom studied under the greatest pagan rhetorician of his time. St. Gregory of Nyssa had an extensive knowledge of human anatomy and biology; some think he might have studied to be a medical doctor. St. John of Damascus was well-acquainted with the science of his time; for example, he knew, as did most knowledgeable people in the East, that the earth was a sphere, that it traveled around the sun and that the moon was a “reflecting” light.

90. When the Gospel entered a new cultural situation, it engaged that culture on its own terms. The people who were responsible for preaching and teaching did not hide from this responsibility. They did not try to make the Greek and Roman world into a Semitic one. They were themselves full participants in that world. But they gave Christian answers to the religious and philosophical questions that were being asked. They began with their faith experience and from that faith experience began to reinterpret all they had learned and understood. They treated those who disagreed with them with respect, while insisting upon the truth revealed in Christ. The

debate was lively because a great deal was at stake.

91. If the Christian message seems not to be reaching the people of our time, we should ask ourselves: Are we offering answers to questions that no one is asking? And perhaps more importantly: Are we willing to engage honestly the many vital questions that people *are* asking? People want to know if the Christian Gospel has anything to contribute to our time. We believe that it does, and the missionary task before us will not be an easy one.

92. We currently live in a world that has been shaped by the principles of the Enlightenment, but this worldview has reached the limits of its possibilities. The Church must detach the Gospel from this worldview. We live in a period of cultural transition. If we are to avoid being marginalized, we need to learn a lesson from the Patristic period and enter into a deep dialogue with the surrounding culture. People long to know God. They are searching for the truth. If we do not help them with their search, others certainly will be stepping into the breach.

93. The Church has followed certain principles in her encounter with different cultures. The first is that every people, in every time period, is constantly being called by God. We are being called not only as persons, but as a 'nation' to embody those virtues that befit creatures created in the image of God. What flows from this is the belief that every people and indeed every culture is able to be transformed and sanctified. We should not despise the people around us.

94. Our vocation, as those who are called to proclaim the Good News, is to help distinguish between that which is good and helpful in a culture or society, and that which is false, leading to ruin. St. Paul's advice to Timothy can be a guide for us: "For everything created by God is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving; for then it is consecrated by the word of God and prayer" (1 Timothy 4:4-5).

95. The second principle to keep in mind is that God is directly present in creation in a real and vital way. St. Gregory Palamas articulated this when he spoke about the difference between God's "essence" and His "energies." He used the image of the sun and its rays. Like the sun, God's inner reality is inaccessible to us; but like the rays of the sun, He is constantly giving us light and warmth. God, who is totally different from us, is still present through His life-giving energies that surround and permeate the whole creation.

96. Similarly, St. Maximos the Confessor spoke of the Logos of God (the Word of God, the Second Person of the Holy Trinity) having seeded the whole of creation so that all created things have within themselves an inner rationale (a "logos" proper to itself) that was placed there to testify to the Creator. This concept, which had been present in pagan philosophy as the "spermatic Logos," was also used by the earliest Christian writers. They based this connection to Christian thought on the first chapter of John's Gospel where he speaks about Jesus Christ, the Word of God.

97. Most of us are not accustomed to thinking in these theological and philosophical categories. It might make more sense if we spoke of the "DNA of salvation." When God created the world through His Son, He embedded within the DNA of everything the sign of His wisdom. This is what the Psalmist expresses when he says: "O Lord, how manifold are your works! In wisdom you have made them all" (Psalms 104:24). God's mark is everywhere. Those who pursue the truth, be they scientists or philosophers, believers or agnostics, will come upon the same Wisdom present even in the most minute corner of the universe.

98. The third important principle is that salvation involves more than human beings and human societies. There is a cosmic dimension to mission. The Lord spoke of a world, indeed a universe, that is shaped and transfigured by His saving love. We say in the hymns of Theophany (Epiphany)

that our Lord's first act of salvation was to cleanse and restore the water – which stands for the whole of creation. St. Paul speaks about the creation waiting with eager longing for the liberation of the children of God (cf. Romans 8:19). We must not be narrowly anthropocentric as we proclaim the Gospel.

99. When we look at the society in which we live, we see that even though its roots traditionally may be Christian, nonetheless, there has been a steady distancing from these roots. We certainly observe this to be the case here in North America, and it is also more and more true in traditionally Orthodox countries. We see a growing number of people who are actively searching for 'meaning' in their lives, however they might understand that word. There has been a rise in attention given to various religions and philosophies presenting themselves as alternatives to Christianity. What is very significant is the large number of people who have grown up outside of any Church, with only the most superficial, and often confused, understanding of the Gospel. In short, our own society has become a primary missionary territory.

100. Unlike other times and places, when the Gospel was preached, most people in our society believe that they *already know* what Christianity has to say. For better or for worse, the Church's history, but more significantly the history of those people who have claimed to act in the name of Christ, has negatively shaped peoples' views of the Christian faith. Our challenge is to frame the proclamation of the Good News so that it speaks in a new and fresh way, breaking through these prejudices.

101. At the same time, we should not forget that many of the foundational principles of modern society are the direct result of the Christian Gospel. Would we speak of human rights had not our Lord taught us the value of every human life? Would we speak of freedom had not our Lord liberated us from the fear of death? Would we speak of equality if our Lord had not lowered the heavens to become one with

us? These principles were embedded in custom and law by people who were living out the Christian Gospel. Although the rationales currently offered for these principles have moved away from their original theological premises, they nonetheless have their basis in the faith experience of those whose lives were changed by the coming of God into the world.

102. Coming out of a Christian worldview, our society has attempted to balance the rights of the individual with a communitarian impulse. What is lost as these principles are separated from their original Christian foundation is the balanced emphasis on the importance of community and responsibility for the other, especially the weakest among us. There is an ancient Christian saying: *unus Christianus, nullus Christianus* – a single Christian is no Christian. What this means is that there can be no individual or isolated Christian. We are Christians in community, in relationship to one another. We would also claim that this is critical for society as a whole.

103. The increased erosion of community in the name of individual rights can be attributed to the inability to appreciate that personal identity can be maintained and supported within society. The reemergence of unapologetic racism and ethnicism have a similar root. Here the individual totally identifies with the group and sees the 'other' as a threat. Can our understanding of the Holy Trinity – as a community of three distinct persons who exist in total love while sharing everything in common – be helpful?

104. As we observed above, people have gone searching to fulfill their need for meaning. Yet, this search often involves popular and personal 'spiritualities' that lack a coherent theology. 'New Age' religions that mix and match according to personal taste give the illusion of spiritual fulfillment, but lack the qualities of true worship. The substitution of purely humanistic social and political movements for a true

relationship with God is another example. These tend to be distractions at best, and idolatry at worst. We have watched as some have ended tragically.

105. But perhaps the most distressing sign we detect today is the degree of cynicism on the part of some young people and the adults influencing them. There are those actively seeking to take away or distort the idealism so characteristic of youth. We see this as a symptom of the hopelessness that affects some young people, be they poor or affluent. Perhaps this helps explain the acts of indiscriminate and merciless violence that we have witnessed in our nation and around the globe. In some places the suicide rate, especially among teenagers, is higher than the overall murder rate. As Christians we have a responsibility to give an account to others for the hope that is in us (cf. 1 Peter 3:14). But even more, we have a responsibility to show them that our hope is more than words, that our love is more than sentiment. People can live without a great many things. They cannot live without hope. It is our obligation to bring the truth and therefore hope to our young people. It is likewise our responsibility to shed light on the many wonderful works and ministry done by our young people across the North American continent, so as to give hope to others and bear witness to the love that our young people have for God. There is a profound message in this.

106. The recent almost unprecedented economic growth in North America, coupled with the collapse of totalitarian communism in other parts of the world, has given us the sense that our economic system is the best and perhaps the only way of organizing a society. We will not, at this time, enter into a detailed commentary on the Christian principles one might use to organize an economy. Rather, we will limit ourselves to a few general observations.

107. The disparity of wealth distribution between the richest members of our society and the poorest is growing at an alarming rate. There is always an 'underclass.' Now there



is a permanent underclass that is definitely unaffected by the rising economic tide. This is not only unjust but creates a sense of hopelessness. This is very troubling, especially in our society that claims to be predicated on a notion of classlessness, or the possibility of persons to change their economic status through gainful employment. The Church can and must help ameliorate the condition of the most vulnerable. But the problem is structural, and needs to be addressed structurally.

108. As bishops who have ties to many churches that suffered terribly under communism, we believe that we have an understanding of that system that few other Americans share. The common belief that communism was predicated on atheistic materialism is true. However, we acknowledge that our capitalist system is no less predicated on purely materialist principles, which also do not engender faith in God. There is no place in the calculus of our economics to account for the 'intangibles' of human existence. Reflect on how the simple accounting phrase "the bottom line" has shaped our whole culture. We use it to force the summarization of an analysis devoid of any externals or irrelevancies to the "heart of the matter." This usually means the monetary outcome.

109. We spoke above about the origins of the word "economy;" and how it was used by the Fathers of the Church to describe God's plan for our salvation. Contrast this meaning of economy to the narrow sense in which we use it today. In spite of the growing need many people feel for meaning in their existence, we seem to be trapped in a substantially materialist understanding of life. This understanding sets God in a compartment far away from the concerns of the 'real' world. In spite of the religious rhetoric which falls so easily from the mouths of some, many of those who have great wealth fail to share their wealth with others, while many of the poor are consumed with get-rich schemes that promise to solve their problems. Can our Christian

understanding of “economy” help our society see life as more than “bread”? (cf. Matthew 4:4)

110. As Orthodox Christians we must have a view of mission that focuses both on the salvation of persons and on the transformation of the cultural context. There is nothing more precious than one soul. Certainly, the surrounding environment can provide support and encouragement in the Christian life. Orthodox mission has traditionally been oriented toward both. As we preach the Good News to those around us, we must be thinking about this question of the cultural context of Orthodox mission in North America. It must become a subject of study and reflection, not only in our seminaries, but also in our parishes and homes. We are not suggesting that there is such a thing as a Christian culture. There is not. However, the risk of not engaging and transforming the culture in which we live is that the Orthodox Church will become just another sect.

111. To transform our culture we must be prepared to enter into a dialogue especially with those of other faiths. Such a dialogue must be constructive. It must be based on religious conviction. This will require that we strengthen and deepen our own theological understanding. Dialogue is more than tolerance. In dialogue we recognize that while different from us, the 'other' does not exist simply to exist. Rather he or she exists as a person who has something to say to me. I am obliged to listen respectfully to what that person has to say. I need to relate what he or she says to my own convictions and evaluate it in the light of my own beliefs.

112. This is not syncretism. Religious syncretism rests on the assumption that each of the participating parties has a positive contribution to make, and that these when collected and collated constitute a whole. New Age religions contain many syncretistic elements, but there are also varying degrees of syncretism in other popular philosophies and ideologies. For us, dialogue means that while we may recognize positive

elements in another religion or even philosophy, these are always to be judged against our own beliefs. We have no interest in forming another religion. But we do have a great deal to say to one another.

113. Sometimes we forget that religion is not about 'religion,' but about our relationship to God, to one another, and to creation. A dialogue with those around us can begin with the obvious challenges of the new millennium. The technology which we created has taken on a life of its own. We should weigh its best uses, while ameliorating its dehumanizing aspects. The ecological crisis, in some ways a child of our technology, poses one of the greatest threats to the environment and to our human existence. There is little debate about this. The causes of the crisis may be technological, but the source of the problem is spiritual. We need to talk with one another about the best ways of improving life for all human beings while preserving the biosphere. The advances in medicine, genetics and other biological sciences pose new concerns to which we must respond. We are in need of serious theological reflection on the nature and meaning of life.

114. The reality of a pluralistic society means that there is religious, racial and ethnic intermingling. We know how prejudice eats away at the fabric of society. We have experienced how it can lead to violence and war. As we begin to engage in dialogue with our society in this new millennium, we need to learn how to talk with one another, to dialogue with the other, in mutual respect and love.

\* \* \*

The holy Church includes many people – men, women and children without number. They are all quite different from one another in birth, in size, in nationality and language, in style of living and age, in trades and opinions, in clothes

and customs, in knowledge and rank, in welfare and in appearance. They are nonetheless all of them in the selfsame Church. Thanks to her, they are all reborn, newly created in the Spirit. The Church grants to all of them without distinction the grace of belonging to Christ and of taking his name by calling themselves Christians.

Faith, moreover, puts us in a position which is extremely simple, and incapable of separation, in such a way that the differences between us seem not to exist, because everything is gathered together into the Church and reconciled in her.

*No one lives alone any more, no one is separated from the others, but all are mutually joined together as brothers and sisters in the simple and indivisible power of faith.*

*Of the first Church, Scripture says: "The company of those who believed were of one heart and soul" (Acts 4:32), in such a way that all the many members looked like a single body, truly worthy of Christ himself, our true Head. And speaking of the action of Christ in the Church, the Apostle asserts: "There is neither male nor female, neither Jew nor Greek, neither circumcised nor uncircumcised, neither barbarian nor Scythian, neither slave nor freeman, but Christ is all and in all." (cf. Galatians 3:28; Colossians 3:11) Christ with the unique power of goodness and with infinite wisdom reunites everything in himself, as the center from which the rays go out.*

Maximus the Confessor

Mystagogia, 1 (PG91, 664)

## A COMMUNITY OF HEALING AND RECONCILIATION

*"I do not pray for these only, but also for those who believe in me through their word, that they may all be one; even as You, Father, are in me, and I in You, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that You have sent me." (John 17:20-21)*

115. We must continually remind ourselves that the Church is a community of healing and reconciliation centered upon Christ and His Gospel. The Lord came into our midst to reconcile us with the Father (cf. Romans 5:10). This divine act of love was expressed time and again in His teachings and His actions. As the Apostle Paul reminds us, God, “reconciled us to Himself through Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, in Christ, God was reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting the message of reconciliation to us” (2 Corinthians 5: 18-19). Faithful to the Lord who is its Head, the Church seeks always to be a sign of God’s love for all, and the means through which the Lord continues to heal and reconcile His people.

116. Divisions among Christians are a tragedy which cannot be ignored. These divisions diminish the message of the Gospel of Salvation and impede the mission of the Church in the world. These divisions among Christians often divide families and contribute to alienation within our society. Recognizing this harsh reality, the Church has always sought to “maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace” (Ephesians 4:3). When divisions have occurred, the Church has consistently sought both to bear witness to the Apostolic Faith and to seek reconciliation so that the world may believe in Christ and His Gospel.

117. The involvement of the Orthodox Church in the quest for the reconciliation of Christians and the restoration of the visible unity of the churches is an expression of our faithfulness to the Lord and His Gospel. By seeking the reconciliation of divided Christians, we are in fact sharing in our Lord’s ministry of reconciliation. As the Third Pre-Conciliar Pan-Orthodox Conference said, “The Orthodox participation in the ecumenical movement does not run counter to the nature and history of the Orthodox Church. It constitutes the consistent expression of the Apostolic Faith

within new historical conditions, in order to respond to new existential demands.”<sup>18</sup>

118. This commitment of the Orthodox to Christian reconciliation does not mean that we approve of every endeavor which is called “ecumenical.” Indeed, we hold that genuine ecumenism must always be rooted in the quest for Christian truth and directed towards a visible unity through which the historic faith of the Church is proclaimed. It must contribute to the salvation of all and give glory to the Lord who calls His disciples to be one, so that the world may believe (cf. John 17:21).

119. In many parts of the world today, Orthodox have been deeply troubled both by those who tend to diminish the richness of the historic Christian faith and by others who have engaged in proselytism directed towards Orthodox believers. Neither of these developments can contribute to genuine reconciliation. Indeed, these tragic developments serve to deepen our conviction that true reconciliation can be founded only upon a common profession of the Apostolic Faith which is free from all expressions of coercion.

120. The Orthodox Church recognizes that the healing of the division with the Oriental Orthodox Churches is a preeminent challenge before us. Following decades of informal dialogues and more recent formal discussions, the international Joint Commission for Theological Dialogue between the Orthodox Church and the Oriental Orthodox Churches has declared (1989): “We have inherited from our fathers in Christ the one Apostolic Faith and tradition, though as Churches we have been separated from each other for centuries. As the two families of Orthodox Churches long out of communion, we now pray and trust in God to restore that communion on the basis of the common Apostolic Faith of the undivided Church of the first centuries which we confess in our common creed.”

121. Mindful of this formal dialogue between the two

families of Orthodox Churches, the Standing Conference of Canonical Orthodox Bishops in the Americas (SCOBAs) has decided to establish a Joint Commission with representatives of the Oriental Orthodox Churches in America. This Commission will take into account both the theological studies of the international commission, as well as the cooperation and opportunities for common theological studies which have existed in North America for many decades. The Commission also will address the pastoral issues confronting our people and parishes in America.

122. SCOBAs has been responsible for establishing and overseeing formal, bilateral theological dialogues with a number of other churches here in North America. A dialogue with the Roman Catholic Church was established in 1965. Subsequent dialogues were established with the Lutheran Church and the Reformed Churches in 1968. Begun in 1962, a dialogue with the Episcopal Church has recently been reestablished. While each dialogue is distinctive, each has been concerned with identifying points of doctrinal agreement as well as those points of disagreement which deserve further study.

123. These bilateral dialogues, which have been sanctioned by SCOBAs, have frequently served to foster Orthodox ecumenical witness at the local level. In many places, Orthodox clergy and laypersons have come together with Roman Catholics and Protestants for theological reflection, Bible study, social witness and prayer for reconciliation. Such activities have done much to overcome old misunderstandings and prejudices among Christians. In addition, these activities have become important means through which both clergy and laity share in the reconciling ministry of Christ our Lord within our society today.

124. Our ecumenical concerns involve us in relationships with other Christians and their churches. Our relationships with persons of other faiths are of a different character,

but are also very important. As Orthodox Christians, we recognize the different faith perspectives between us and the adherents of other religions. At the same time, we affirm the need to treat all persons with dignity and respect. Living in this multireligious society, we also affirm the critical need for respect and understanding of different religious traditions. These differences in religious belief and practices cannot be used to justify any form of prejudice or discrimination. On the contrary, we encourage Orthodox Christians to join with all persons of good will in addressing the serious moral challenges which we face together in this society.

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*What, then, is His prayer and how does He make it? He asks "that they may be one, as you, Father, are in me and I in you, so that they may be one in us" (John 17: 21). So, He prays for the bond of love and harmony and peace which brings those who believe onwards towards the unity of the Spirit, as if it were a natural and substantial unity. Clearly, we are to imitate the characteristics of the unity we understand to exist between the Father and the Son, a unity that means agreement in all things and mutual progress towards unity through undivided oneness of mind...*

*In order that we might go forward towards unity with God and with one another, and might ourselves be mingled together, even though we differ, considered in the particularity of soul and body, by the features that we know make us distinct, the Only-Begotten contrived a certain strategy through the wisdom that is His own and by the will of the Father. By providing a blessing for those who believe in Him in the form of a single body, namely His own, through mystical communion He formed them as a single body with Himself and one another. For who could tear apart, who would alienate from natural union with each other, those who are*



*bound into union with Christ through His holy body? (cf. 1 Corinthians 10:17). Christ, after all, cannot be divided. For this reason the Church is called Christ's body, and each of us His members, according to the mind of Paul (cf. Ephesians 5:30). But if we are a single body in Christ, not only with each other but even with Him, who has come to be within us through His own flesh, how is it that we are all not clearly one, both in each other and in Christ?*

St Cyril of Alexandria

Commentary on the Gospel of John, XI, 11

## THE COMMUNITY THAT REMEMBERS

*"Do this in remembrance of me." (Luke 22:19)*

125. The Lord, "on the night when He was betrayed" (1 Corinthians 11:23), gathered His Apostles together to celebrate the Passover. He was aware of what was about to happen to Him, and wanted not only to prepare His Apostles for His coming death, but also wanted to show them the real significance of His death and resurrection. During the meal He took bread and wine, blessed them and gave them to the Apostles saying, "Do this in remembrance of me" (Luke 22:19; 1 Corinthians 11:24). He told them that this bread and wine were now His own body and blood; that by partaking of them, they were partaking of Him. From that night on, over the last two thousand years, the Orthodox Christian community has remained faithful to the Lord's charge. Orthodox Christians have gathered to celebrate the Holy Eucharist in times of persecution and in times of freedom, and it is this remembrance that has shaped who we are.

126. Memory is the key to identity. In remembering where we were born, who our parents and family are, the school where we studied, our friends and our neighbors, we know

who we are. There is a basic psychological function at work upon which rests our self-consciousness and even our health. Those of us who have had the experience of a loved one who has been afflicted with Alzheimer's Disease know that the most painful aspect of the disease is the loss of the memory of the person despite continuing life.

127. Human culture is largely a product of memory. Even before the written word, people transmitted their collective memories through epic poems and myths. The invention of writing allowed the preservation of experience and knowledge. By recording our memories – and today we have many means available to us in addition to writing – we also hope to make available our wisdom and experiences to future generations. Memory links us to both the past and the future.

128. Implicit in the idea of memory is relationship. Our personal memories are linked to people and the events in our lives shaped by those people. Our communal memories operate in the same fashion. Nations or peoples have a common remembered history that ties them to one another, as well as to those who preceded them. If a national or ethnic identity is to endure, it must be successfully transmitted to the next generation.

129. Memory, then, is dynamic. New events shed light on old ones. New persons deepen our experience of others. Time can cause memories to fade or even disappear. And of course, choice – our choice – is clearly a factor. As the Psalmist says: "In bed I remember you, as I lie awake I reflect on you, mindful of how you helped me" (Psalms 63:6-7).<sup>19</sup> As Americans, we pride ourselves on being able to 'remake' ourselves. This altering of our identity is accomplished by deciding what we will remember and what we will choose to forget.

130. Our survival is entirely dependent on our remembrance of God, and God's decision to keep us in His memory. Our identity as God's people is tied to the remembrance of the

saving acts of God. "You shall remember," God told the Hebrews, "what the Lord your God did to Pharaoh and to all Egypt, the great trials which your eyes saw, the signs, the wonders, the mighty hand, and the outstretched arm, by which the Lord your God brought you out" (Deuteronomy 7:18-19). This liberation takes on new meaning, perspective and dynamism for us in the person of Jesus Christ. The Passover (Pascha) from slavery to freedom becomes the Passover (Pascha) from death to life. We remember the saving acts of God, and this remembrance grounds us as it renews us.

131. The remembrance to which we are invited brings together past, present and future in one movement of thanksgiving and hope. As Orthodox Americans we remember the Orthodox mission that evangelized native peoples of Alaska more than two hundred years ago, bringing the Gospel of Christ in a manner in which it respected their cultures while showing love for the people. We remember the immigrants who came to America seeking religious freedom and economic opportunity, and building Orthodox communities and institutions. We remember the men and women who entered the Orthodox Church by their own free choice and decision, seeking the apostolic faith brought to our own time without interruption or dilution.

132. All liturgy is intended to continually re-present to us the saving works of God. When you participate in the holy services of our Church, listen carefully to the prayers as they are being read. One of their essential characteristics is how they draw upon examples from the Holy Scriptures to recall in detail the saving works of God. God has no need to be reminded of what He has done for us. We are the ones who need our memories refreshed. We are the ones who need to be reminded that God's promise is forever. Think how powerful it is when the celebrant says: "As You were present then, so also be present now!"<sup>20</sup> By remembering God's saving power we are assured of His love for us.

133. We see something similar in the liturgical use of the word “today.” At Christmas we hear the choir sing, “Today the Virgin gives birth ...” At Theophany we hear, “Today the Master hastens toward baptism ...” On Great Friday, standing before the precious Cross, we hear, “Today is hung upon the Tree ...” And on Great and Holy Pascha (Easter) we hear, “It is the day of Resurrection ...” Our remembrance of God’s saving acts is not nostalgia. Through remembrance we ourselves become participants in God’s saving work. With David we say: “How can I repay the Lord all his favors to me? I will lift the cup of salvation and call on the name of the Lord” (Psalms 116:13-14).

134. The center of our remembrance is the Eucharist, the Divine Liturgy. In the Divine Liturgy, we, the eucharistic community, call to mind the entire economy of God in the person of Jesus Christ through the Holy Spirit. We remember “all that came to pass for our sake, the cross, the tomb, the resurrection on the third day, the ascension into heaven, the enthronement at the right hand of the Father, and the second, glorious coming.”<sup>21</sup> We ask that the Holy Spirit, as at Pentecost, descend upon us and the presented Gifts. The saving work of God moves from the remembrance of the past event to the present; from “theory” to actuality; from then to now. We are made holy. We are made into the Body of Christ. It is for each of us a personal, as well as communal event.

135. It should be clear from what we have said that this remembrance belongs not in our head, but in our heart – the center of the spiritual faculty. We remember not in order to dwell on the past, but to know where we are going. We said above that one of the remarkable aspects of the American character is the openness to remake oneself. For Christians this idea echoes the newness we find in Christ (cf. 2 Corinthians 5:17). But remaking oneself without a grounding in true existence is a recipe for confusion and even disaster. The newness that we desire can only be found

in God. Forgetting one's past is not the same as forgiveness given by accepting God's grace. Reinventing oneself is not the same as being renewed in the Holy Spirit.

136. The Church is not a museum and we are not Her curators. The Church is a living and breathing community, the Body of Christ. Liturgy as remembrance is not slavish adherence to particular forms. Rather, we remember God's saving work to know who we are so that we can act in the here and now. We remember as a community and in a community, because we know that we are joined with Christ along with our brothers and sisters, and are not unconnected individuals. It is not accidental that the Church is organized around local eucharistic communities charged with remembering and acting.

137. We should keep in mind that when the Apostles went out from Jerusalem to the four corners of the earth to proclaim the Good News, they established churches – communities – that became the living repositories of the Gospel of Salvation. We have become used to thinking about the Church in restrictive institutional terms. This is a valid observation – institutions are vital to human existence. But we can forget that the Church is not bricks and mortar, hierarchies and clergy, departments and committees. She is not even, strictly speaking, particular rituals and forms. She is first and foremost the community that remembers the mighty actions of God.

138. Look closely at the language we use when we describe this reality. We speak of communion between us and God. But we also speak of communion between churches. And finally we see this manifested concretely in the communion which we share when we partake of the Bread and Wine become the Body and Blood of Christ. The word "community" shares the same root as "communion," because it is a manifestation of the same reality. Through the celebration of the Holy Eucharist, the community becomes one with all those who preceded, and with all those who are yet to come. It is

present at once in the here-and-now and in eternity. The true community maintains this communion with God and with all those who keep His remembrance.

139. On the American continent, this communion of the Orthodox Churches has been concretely embodied in the Standing Conference of Canonical Orthodox Bishops in the Americas (SCOBA) for forty years. Of course, the question of how to organize the Church here in a more traditionally canonical way has preoccupied us – bishops, priests, theologians and lay persons – for longer than that.

140. We should not forget that many practical steps toward that end have been and are being taken. We can point to a number of cooperative efforts under SCOBA. There is the Orthodox Christian Education Commission that helps to coordinate religious education. There is the Orthodox Christian Mission Center, the official mission and evangelism agency of our Churches. There is the Orthodox Theological Society in America. There is the International Orthodox Christian Charities that stands as a model for world Orthodoxy in the realm of international relief organizations. There is the cooperative effort to train Orthodox youth workers and the efforts to bring our young people together. We spoke above about the variety of theological dialogues and consultations with other Christian churches that are coordinated and overseen by SCOBA.

141. On the regional and local level, we could speak of the projects and endeavors that parish clergy and lay people of all of the Orthodox dioceses, have undertaken to manifest visibly the mission and unity of our Church.

142. We are planning to invite all of the beloved brother bishops, the hierarchs of the member Churches of SCOBA, to gather in the spring of 2001 to discuss matters of local pastoral concern.

143. Let us remind ourselves that unity – all unity – is a

gift from God to us. It is not our own doing. We prepare ourselves to accept this gift by our spiritual disposition, by our openness to one another. The work we have done until now and the work that remains to be done help us to open our hearts continually.

144. None of us yet knows how a future Orthodox Church on the North American continent will be organized. We must discover how to balance the richness of our diversity with the need for a cohesive administration. This discussion will have to continue until a consensus is reached by all those concerned.

145. The future of our Church lies in our willingness to work together. There is probably no better place for us to center this activity than the local parish. Our parish is the place where each of us, from bishop to smallest child, was taught and nurtured in the bosom of the Body of Christ. This local parish has many faces. It is a grand cathedral with thousands of participants and it is a small hut with a dirt floor. Given our missionary experience in America, it is a store front and it is a warehouse space. What makes it heaven on earth is that there, in that place, the Church gathers to remember the saving acts of God.

146. The truth is that parish life in North America is very different from that in traditionally Orthodox countries. Parishes are organized differently. The activities that are centered in them are different. There are ethnic, cultural and charitable aspects to parish life that simply are not emphasized in other places, or perhaps are irrelevant or not needed there. We take special note of the involvement of laypersons in our parishes. This is consistent with Orthodox ecclesiology, and also reflects the American spirit of activism and volunteerism. The challenge for us is to learn what keeps our communities vital while remaining faithful to what has been entrusted to us. It is remembrance that allows us to do this.

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*Because we are composed of a dual nature, soul and body, we need a dual birth and dual nourishment. We receive our birth by means of water and Spirit, that is, by Holy Baptism. We find our nourishment in the bread of life, that is, in Jesus Christ Himself. When the moment arrived for Him to undergo death for us of His own free will, in the night in which He was to be handed over to His enemies, He established a new covenant with His disciples, and through them with all those who believe in Him. He washed his disciples' feet, offering in this a symbol of Holy Baptism. Then, breaking the bread, He gave it to them saying: "Take and eat; this is my body which will be broken for you for the forgiveness of sins." In the same way He gave them the cup with the wine and the water saying: "Drink, this is my blood."*

*If sky, earth, water, iron and air have been created by the Word of God, so much more certainly this noble being called humanity has been formed by Him. And if the Word Himself became flesh by the pure blood of the Virgin, will He not be able to make the bread His body and the wine and water His blood?*

*In the beginning God said: "Let the earth bring forth green grass." And so after that the earth, watered by the rain, in obedience to God's command, brings forth its fruits. Then God said: "This is my body, this is my blood," adding: "Do this in memory of me." After that, all the mystery takes place, thanks to His all-powerful Word, and proclaims its faith in the Lord.*

*It is a new kind of planting. The rain comes down on it, that is to say, the power of the Spirit comes down, and overshadows it.*

St. John of Damascus

On the Orthodox Faith, 4, 13 (PG94, 1137ff.)



## A COMMUNITY OF HOPE AND JOY

*"So you have sorrow now, but I will see you again and your hearts will rejoice, and no one will take your joy from you."*  
(John 16:22)

147. It has never been easy to believe in the Resurrection. Think about those holy women who went to the tomb to anoint the Lord's Body on the third day after His death on the Cross. What they encountered there was something that none of them could ever have imagined: an empty tomb, radiant angels, and Jesus risen from the dead. Astonished, they ran to tell the Disciples (cf. Matthew 28:8).

148. Think about the Disciples. After the Lord's death they sat huddled and confused in the upper room. When the women – Mary of Magdala, Joanna and the others – came to tell what they had found, they simply did not believe it. The Gospel of Luke reports that to the Apostles "these words seemed to them like an idle tale and they did not believe them" (Luke 24:11).

149. Even after the Lord had appeared to the other Disciples in the upper room, Thomas, who had not been present (cf. John 20:24-29), still would not believe the story. It was not until the Lord appeared to him and told him to touch His wounds that he finally declared: "My Lord and my God!"

150. The joy that the women and the other Disciples felt was still an earthly joy. They were happy, just as anyone of us would be, that someone whom they knew to be dead was alive again. However, they had not yet understood that Jesus' rising was not simply a personal event. They could not yet comprehend the cosmic significance. After their initial joy, the Disciples went back to their regular lives. They went fishing (cf. John 21).

151. Not until the Holy Spirit had enlightened them on the day of Pentecost did they begin to appreciate what had

occurred. The Lord's rising from the dead became *their* personal event. This was not another resurrection like that of Lazarus (John 11:43), or Jairus' daughter (Mark 5:41). It was a victory over death itself. This was now a different kind of joy, the joy that "no one could take away."

152. This joy is spiritual. It is the realization in our hearts that nothing can harm us because God, in the person of His Son, has freed us. But many people, even among those who believe, confuse this joy with a happiness that is earth-bound, not centered on the Lord. You do not need to be a psychologist to recognize that people pursue material objects thinking that these things will make them happy. We live in a society comprising six percent of the world's population and we consume two-thirds of the earth's resources. Happiness eludes us, yet we continue to hope.

153. In fact, we live by hope. This is true for everyone, believer and unbeliever alike. We could not continue from one day to the next without hope. We hope that the sun will rise in the morning. We hope that our nation will be at peace. We hope that we will have a job. We hope that our family and loved ones will be well. We may long for certainty, but we live by hope. St. Paul makes an obvious but important point when he says: "Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what he sees?" (Romans 8:24). Our question is: on what do we hope?

154. For Christians, our hope rests on Christ, on His resurrection. "For if Christ has not been raised ... [our] faith is in vain" (1 Corinthians 15:17). His resurrection gives us an assurance that suffering and death – all too common in this present existence – do not have the final word. St. Paul, speaking from his own experience of pain and trial, reminds us that "the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us" (Romans 8:18). And so we live by hope, which is that place between sadness and joy.

155. St. Symeon the New Theologian, in a remarkable explanation of the hymn, “Having beheld the resurrection of Christ,” differentiates between those who *believe* in Christ’s resurrection and those who have *beheld* His resurrection. He says that a great many people believe in His resurrection, but there are not so many who see His resurrection. And, leading us deeper into the meaning of that phrase, he asks: Why do we say ‘beheld’ when we now live hundreds of years from that event? Moreover, even of those who were present – the soldiers guarding the tomb, the women bringing myrrh, the Disciples hiding out of fear – not one of them was an eyewitness to the event. He tells us what we should already know, “that the resurrection of Christ takes place in each of us who believes, not just once, but every hour of every day, when Christ the Master arises in us, resplendent and flashing with the lightening brightness of His Divinity.”<sup>22</sup> When that happens, we know the power of Christ’s resurrection because we ourselves see Him risen. His resurrection will be our experience as it was the experience of the very first Christians. Then we will have that joy that no one will take away.

156. In the spiritual tradition of the Church, great guides like the Desert Fathers advise us that we should always be thinking about our death. Not in a morbid fashion, but in order to put all of our life into immediate relief, to help us prioritize. This question of death has dominated human thought from the moment we were able to engage in any act of self-reflection. Everything in our being screams out that we do not want to, that we should not, pass into nonexistence. Even for those of us who try to avoid thinking about it, it preoccupies us in ways that we hardly notice. It has the power to shape and influence our behavior. If we might say out loud that “we can’t take it with us,” we nevertheless consume and accumulate goods as though we hope that we can. Long before modern psychology proposed

its own theories surrounding it, we have known in our hearts that the fear of death is the foundation of all fear.

157. Throughout this letter we have used the words “Good News” when referring to the Gospel. Good News is a direct translation of the original Greek word “*Evangelion*.” The Good News that the first witnesses of the Lord’s resurrection proclaimed to the world was His victory over death. It was Good News then, and it remains Good News for us today. It is Good News because it addresses this primary human question.

158. The spiritual life is not just for a select few. It is for everyone. The life in Christ needs to be more than a two-hour segment on Sunday morning. It must permeate our entire being. The only thing that satisfies our true longing, gives us real joy, is communion with the living God.

159. One of the challenges we face is that the language of religious experience used today has been shaped by many different voices. Many of the virtues and spiritual practices that we know from our own experience lead to God are not valued today. Emotionalism is confused with spirituality. Thus, we are somewhat reluctant even to speak of the joy which God gives us, for fear of being misunderstood.

160. Listen to this spiritual advice from St. Diadochos: “Initiatory joy is one thing, the joy of perfection is another. The first is not exempt from fantasy, while the second has the strength of humility. Between the two joys comes a ‘godly sorrow’ (2 Corinthians 7:10) and tears unaccompanied by grief; ‘For in much wisdom is much knowledge; and he that increases knowledge increases sorrow’” (Ecclesiastes 1:18).<sup>23</sup>

161. As a society we have forgotten that wisdom comes only by the grace of God and as a spiritual gift that should be cherished. Joy is a gift that God gives us to encourage us in the spiritual life. The world is full of joy and our Lord has given us these signs as a means to comfort and hearten us on

the road of life. Some mistake this foretaste as the whole, or see any pleasure as good.

162. In the hymn, "Having beheld the Resurrection of Christ," there is a verse: "For through the Cross, joy has come into the world." Here we come face to face with the heart of the Christian paradox, the one thing that the "world" will always reject: true joy, true happiness, true community, true fulfillment comes only through the giving of ourselves out of love for our brother and sister. This is what the Lord means when He says: "Whoever seeks to gain his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life will preserve it" (Luke 17:33). We find true joy in our love for the other, the same love our Lord showed us on the Cross.

163. St. Paul declares: "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?... No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us" (Romans 8:35-37). As Christians we not only choose the path of Christ, we choose it with joy, because it fills us with hope.

164. And so, beloved brothers and sisters, "May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope" (Romans 15:13). "Rejoice always, pray constantly, give thanks in all circumstances" (1 Thessalonians 5:16-18). As we stand at the dawn of this Third Millennium of our Salvation, let our faith be a witness to the entire world of God's love, even as the faith of the countless holy men and women who preceded us has been an inspiration for us.

May the Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the Love of God the Father, and the Communion of the Holy Spirit be with each and every one of you.

*for His Lp Demetrios*

+ Archbishop DEMETRIOS, Chairman  
Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America

*+ Phil. P.*

+ Metropolitan PHILIP, Vice Chairman  
Antiochian Orthodox Christian  
Archdiocese of America

*+ Metropolitan Joseph*

+ Metropolitan JOSEPH, Secretary  
Bulgarian Eastern Orthodox Church

*+ Metropolitan Nicholas*

+ Metropolitan NICHOLAS, Treasurer  
American Carpatho-Russian Orthodox  
Greek Catholic Diocese in the U.S.A.

*+ Theodosius*

+ Metropolitan THEODOSIUS  
Orthodox Church in America

*+ Archbishop Victorin*

+ Archbishop VICTORIN  
Romanian Orthodox Archdiocese  
in America and Canada

*+ Christopher*

+ Metropolitan CHRISTOPHER  
Serbian Orthodox Church  
in the United States and Canada

*+ Constantine*

+ Metropolitan CONSTANTINE  
Ukrainian Church of the USA

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## AT THE DAWN OF A NEW MILLENNIUM

***The North American Joint Committee  
of Orthodox and Catholic Bishops***

*Orthodox Academy of Crete,  
Chania, Greece  
October 4, 2000*

Our Joint Committee of Orthodox and Catholic Bishops was founded in 1981 as a forum where Orthodox and Catholic hierarchs from the United States and Canada could discuss pastoral matters of concern to both our churches. Gathered together now at our seventeenth meeting, we wish to take stock of our Joint Committee's work, and to affirm the importance of continued and intensified dialogue between our two communions.

We look back with joy on the dramatic events of the 1960s that brought an end to the many centuries of hostility that kept us apart from one another. The meeting between Ecumenical Patriarch Athenagoras and Pope Paul VI in Jerusalem in 1964 was followed by the formal lifting of the 1054 *anathemas* on December 7, 1965. Those excommunications were reversed, to be replaced by relationships of love – they were “erased from the memory of the Church” and “consigned to oblivion.” The growing dialogue of charity between Catholics and Orthodox led finally to the establishment of an official International Joint Commission for Theological Dialogue between the Catholic Church and the Orthodox

Church by Ecumenical Patriarch Dimitrios I and Pope John Paul II when the Pope visited Istanbul in November 1979. This renewed relationship has been symbolized by the semi-annual exchange of delegations between the sister churches of Rome and Constantinople on their respective feast days, and a rejection among our faithful of "every form of proselytism, every attitude which would or could be perceived as a lack of respect" (Common Declaration of Pope John Paul II and Ecumenical Patriarch Dimitrios I, December 7, 1987).

With gratitude we note that this theological dialogue was anticipated by almost fifteen years in the United States. Prior to the establishment of our Joint Committee of Orthodox and Catholic Bishops in 1981, an official Orthodox-Catholic Theological Consultation had been meeting since September 9, 1965, even before the excommunications were lifted. In North America, where Catholics and Orthodox live side by side in a place that is to a large extent free of the political and religious tension that has often been present in our countries of origin, our theological dialogue has been able to make much progress and to address various theological and pastoral questions touching upon our relationship. At its June 2000 meeting, our North American Theological Consultation issued a document entitled, "Sharing the Ministry of Reconciliation: Statement on the Orthodox-Catholic Dialogue and the Ecumenical Movement." We wish to express our satisfaction with this important text, and we recommend it warmly to our faithful. We make our own its evaluation of the Catholic-Orthodox dialogue and the broader ecumenical movement as rooted in the very actions of God who "desires everyone to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth" (1 Tim 2:4).

The fall of communism in Eastern and Central Europe and the establishment of religious freedom in those countries ten years ago now is a source of deep joy for all people of faith. But these profound changes also unleashed hostilities

between our communities there that had remained under the surface, unaddressed during the long years of persecution, isolation, and silence. These problems focused on the status of the Eastern Catholic Churches and questions of property. At the same time, strident currents emerged in both our churches in those areas, fueled in part by the suspicion that ecumenism was a betrayal of the true faith, and that it had been manipulated by the communist authorities for their own ends in an attempt to weaken authentic Christian witness. This points to the urgent need to present the true nature of ecumenical dialogue, not as a betrayal of anyone's faith, but as an effort to understand what we truly have in common at a level deeper than our divisions and theological formulae.

All this has had a negative impact on the international dialogue which for the past ten years has been struggling to deal in a satisfactory way with the question of the status of the Eastern Catholic Churches. We regret that the Eighth Plenary Session of the international dialogue, held in July 2000 at Emmitsburg, Maryland, was unable to make progress on this and other significant issues.

The difficulties that have recently beset the international dialogue do not alter our conviction that continued dialogue in love is the only way that our churches can be faithful to Our Lord's command to love one another, and to be reconciled. Indeed, when difficulties arise the need for dialogue becomes even greater. As we look back on our experience of dialogue with one another as bishops of the Orthodox and Catholic churches, we realize that through an honest and well-informed exchange of views a solution to even the most persistent disagreements can be perceived. Our Joint Committee of Bishops has issued statements dealing with ordination, mixed marriages and the recent tensions in Eastern and Central Europe, and we are confident that much more progress can be made on these and other issues. We encourage our Orthodox and Catholic faithful everywhere

to engage one another in an exchange of views in a spirit of openness and humility so that the Spirit's work of reconciliation might continue, for the glory of God.

Our Joint Committee is meeting on the island of Crete, whose soil has been fed by the blood of a host of martyrs, and whose history has not been unaffected by our sad divisions. We take this opportunity to give thanks to God for the great strides that have been made to overcome what divides us. As the new millennium dawns, we join our prayer to those of Orthodox and Catholic faithful around the world that our churches may continue to set aside the animosities of the past and look forward in hope to that blessed day when we shall once again be united around the common table of our Lord.

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**Cleanliness, Not a Condition for Godliness:  
*Alousia* as a Canonical  
Requirement in Late Byzantium**

PATRICK VISCUSO

Ablutions often constitute an important element of rituals associated with initiation, prayer and purgation. Such cleansing is frequently related to contact with sacred objects and placement within a spiritual hierarchy. In late Byzantium, ritual washing occurred through baptismal rites of initiation. Full immersion is a major stipulation of Byzantine canon law governing baptism and becomes a feature of late Byzantine polemic against the Latin use of infusion and aspersion.

Nevertheless, despite the requirement of ritual washing for initiation into Orthodox Christianity and reception of Communion, late Byzantine canonical regulations stipulate that prior to and after celebration of the Eucharist, presbyters may not cleanse themselves or bathe. As an ascetic usage, *alousia* or abstinence from cleansing is viewed as an element of Byzantine piety frequently found in monastic writings, but is generally unexamined as a legal requirement for participation in sacred rituals. This brief study will examine the canonical regulations for *alousia* or abstinence from bathing in late Byzantine law especially in connection with the celebration and reception of the Eucharist.

The main canonical writers to deal with the question of bathing are Theodore Balsamon, John Kastamonites, and Ioasaph of Ephesos. Theodore Balsamon (c.1140 - c.1195), a

patriarch of Antioch, composed commentaries on the canons of the Fathers, ecumenical councils and local synods. Among his works are a series of canonical responses to questions posed by the Patriarch Mark of Alexandria. These answers were written after synodal deliberations in Constantinople under Ecumenical Patriarch George Xiphilinos (1191-98) and were regarded as having an official character based on the authority of the Great Church.<sup>1</sup>

A prior edition of these canonical answers was authored by John Kastamonites, a metropolitan of Chalcedon, which were reviewed by the Constantinopolitan synod and later reworked in Balsamon's version as the official response to Alexandria. Kastamonites was a contemporary of Balsamon, who served as secretary to Basil Kamateros, patriarch of Constantinople (1183-1186). His name appears in the lists of those present at synods in Constantinople on 27 November 1191 as well as 8 January 1192, and appears in the title of several literary compositions. The Metropolitan is attributed no other canonical work.<sup>2</sup>

Ioasaph of Ephesos is a relatively unconsidered figure of the early fifteenth century. As a *megas protosynkellos*, Ioasaph most likely had an expert knowledge of both canonical and civil legislation. He represented the Byzantines in dealing with the Latins of Basel and was to have been the legate of the Antiochian Patriarchate at Ferrara-Florence, but died in 1437 shortly before the convening of this council. He is attributed a series of fifty-seven canonical responses with a brief introduction addressed to questions of a certain presbyter, George Drazinos, apparently resident in Crete.

The questions and answers are written from a clergyman's or monk's point of view, particularly emphasized through their liturgical nature with instructions on celebrating various services. In contrast to the other canonical responses, Ioasaph's work makes few explicit references to specific laws, Scriptural texts, legal sources or imperial legislation,



appearing to avoid technical discussion, yet seems based on a knowledge of the laws in conveying their essential points.

In this way, the writing gives the appearance of a pastoral work directed at the practitioner, perhaps a diocesan bishop administering canonical rulings and judging cases, rather than the legal scholar or jurist. As such, one might characterize the responses as a Byzantine pastoral manual of the fifteenth century, perhaps providing us a description of late Byzantine diocesan or even parish life based on the perspective of one author.<sup>3</sup>

Contemporary to these canonical writers, monastic *typika* included regulations on bathing and may be categorized in terms of greater or lesser strictness.<sup>4</sup> Certain *typika* forbid bathing altogether. Others variously permit washing annually, three times a year, monthly and weekly. In general, the *typika* present abstinence from bathing as a virtue reflective of the monastic life. For example, the eleventh-century *typikon* of Evergetis states:

Concerning the fact that there should be a bath for the sick and it should be heated, but should be heated three times a year for the brothers who are healthy.

You should live completely without bathing. For although we have built a bath in the monastery, yet it was not that you should live in an effeminate way, bathing and being in good physical condition, but that the sick could be comforted, if necessary. However we give permission for those who are healthy to have a bath three times during the year, at the feast of the Holy Nativity, at Holy Easter, and thirdly at the feast of the bodily *Metastasis* from this world of our most holy Lady Mother of God; but extra bathing, if necessary, should be permitted at the discretion of the superior. So these instructions are enough for your virtue, but lest you wrangle about other matters, I must deal with them also.<sup>5</sup>

The fact that this *typikon* stipulates that bathing is limited

only to great feast days preceded by Lents, during which no washing takes place implies that *alousia* is a form of fasting. This point is made clearer in the twelfth-century *typikon* of Pantokrator:

Since it is also fitting that the monks should have the refreshment of bathing, they should all have a bath twice in the month to wash themselves, except however during fasts. For in no way will they wash themselves during Lent, as has been stated, and during the other two fasts they will take a bath once a month.<sup>6</sup>

Monastic writers also associate bathing, especially with warm water, with a bodily comfort inappropriate to progress in the spiritual life. St. Peter of Damaskos, writing in the eleventh century, categorizes “abstinence from washing oneself” in his list of virtues.<sup>7</sup> During the same period, St. Symeon the New Theologian advises, “if, brother, consumed by spiritual ardor you have entered a monastery or placed yourself under a spiritual father, do not indulge in baths, food, or other bodily consolations, even if urged to do so by your spiritual father himself or by monastic brethren.”<sup>8</sup> These reflect an earlier tradition represented by the fifth-century writer St. Diadochos of Photiki who states:

No one would maintain that it is strange or sinful to take baths, but to refrain from them out of self-control I regard as a sign of great restraint and determination. For then our body will not be debilitated by this self-indulgence in hot and steamy water; neither shall we be reminded of Adam’s ignoble nakedness, and so have to cover ourselves with leaves as he did. All this is especially important for us, who have recently renounced the vileness of this fallen life, and ought to be acquiring the beauty of self-restraint through the purity of our body.<sup>9</sup>

The monastic regulations set forth definite times when bathing, otherwise forbidden, is permitted. In general, this

abstinence or fasting from washing reflects an overall ascetic discipline based on self-denial and death to the world. As reflective of monastic discipline, *alousia*, or abstinence from bathing, is regarded as a virtue leading to spiritual progress.

In contrast, the writings of the late canonists presuppose the possibility of bathing immediately before or after the liturgy, and thus indicate an audience not under strict monastic regulation and discipline. This underlies Ioasaph of Ephesos' tenth canonical response,

For let him neither bathe before the liturgy or after the liturgy, but during the evening, and let him celebrate liturgy in the morning.<sup>10</sup>

The same presupposition appears to underlie the questions twelve and fifty-three of Balsamon, where the laity is explicitly mentioned,

#### Question 12

If a priest bathes, is he able to celebrate liturgy on the same day? And a layman after going to the baths, may he be permitted on the same day to partake of the Mysteries? And contrariwise, will the priest who celebrated liturgy or the layman deemed worthy of the Holy Elements, bathe or be bled, or not?

#### Question 53

Is it without danger on the Lord's day to go to the baths and to cleanse oneself with warm water, or not?<sup>11</sup>

The same implication is contained in John of Chalcedon's seventeenth response,

#### Question 17

If one celebrates the liturgy, should he bathe?

## Answer

While not dangerous, nevertheless because of bodily luxury and softness, bathing is not permitted, unless a dire condition will require the remedy of bathing for me, and it has been prescribed to devote ourselves to prayer on the day of Holy Communion and after communion.<sup>12</sup>

In this way, the questions appear to originate from and apply to diocesan bishops, parish clergy and laity, rather than monastic circles. John of Chalcedon's response in emphasizing the need to refrain from bodily luxury and softness reflects a theme common with monastic writers who emphasize the need for privation and abstinence from comfort. Bathing as a bodily luxury and "softness" is viewed as a distraction from prayer. However, the Metropolitan's answer makes this abstinence a specific preparation for prayer associated with communion and not a general ascetic discipline that would be associated with a monastic regulation.

This treatment of *alousia* as a preparation rather than a discipline is continued in Balsamon's recasting of John Kastamonites' response. Balsamon states in his twelfth answer,

Galen, the most learned among physicians, states, "bathing, sun and exercise put into motion the superfluities (τὰ περιττώματα) formerly at rest," wherefore nothing of which you asked will take place. For the incisions of veins controls their evil properties, according to Hippocratic teachings; at one time they produce an evaporation, at another time a confinement. Why would we join a thing anticipated probably to be evil to the salvific mixture of the sanctified elements, and easily overshadow the light of our salvation, where a righteous word compels the ones who perform sacred rites both before the Eucharist and after the Eucharist with all compunction and piety to bend their knees before God, and give thanks on account of partaking of the Lord's body and blood, and not to be enfeebled by

slackness (βλακείας) and sprinklings of warm waters? If a life-threatening illness impels the bloodletting, it shall be performed for the salvation of the afflicted one.<sup>13</sup>

The association of “slackness” (βλακείας) and bathing is also contained in a monastic sermon made by Eustathios of Thessalonike (ca. 1115-1195/96), a contemporary of Balsamon.<sup>14</sup> The enfeeblement of the body produced by warm water is a common theme in monastic writings, exemplified in the text of St. Diadochos of Photiki cited above. However, similar to its treatment by John Kastamonites, the context for Balsamon is not an overall ascetic discipline, but of necessary preparations for celebrating the Eucharist. The Patriarch addresses the preparation necessary to “perform sacred rites” and partake of “the Lord’s Body and Blood” based on contemporary medical science, the second-century medical authority Galen. This preparation involves abstinence from stimulation or sensuality, and in this sense, is a form of fasting preparation necessary in order to consecrate and partake of the Eucharist. In a similar way, Balsamon elsewhere also forbids married clergy to engage in marital relations prior to celebration of the Eucharist.<sup>15</sup> As in the case of marital relations, while not prohibiting bathing in general, this abstinence is part of the fasting preparation necessary for maintaining the purity of the priestly vessel to receive the grace and to avoid its defilement in relation to the sacred. In this context, otherwise uncondemned relations and bathing become an “evil” that overshadows “the light of our salvation” when enfeebling the body and distracting one from prayer.<sup>16</sup> Although this answer does not address the laity specifically, since the question included them, the implication is that *alousia* is necessary for reception of Communion by others in addition to the celebrant.

In his fifty-third response, Balsamon specifically addresses the question of bathing by the laity:

## Question 53

Is it without danger on the Lord's day to go to the baths and to cleanse oneself with warm water, or not?

## Answer

Both the divine Fathers taught, and the fifty-fourth novel of the lord emperor Leo the Wise rightly legislated that the faithful refrain from any work on the Lord's day. For he states the following: "We also order, consistent with what was decided by the Holy Spirit and the Apostles who were inspired by Him, that all rest on the divine day dedicated to our immortality, and neither undertake farming nor any other work that is not permitted on this day. For if those who long ago honored shadows and types held the day of the Sabbath with such respect that they devoted themselves to complete rest, how equitable is it for those whom the grace and truth makes servants, not to honor the day that the Lord enriched with dignity and freed us from the dishonor of corruption? Or, when one of the seven days is devoted to the honoring of the Lord, how is it not a complete lack of conscience for us not to be content with the six that are sufficient for work and to hold that one undiminished for the Lord, but to regard that day as a common one and to consider it a time for our own work?"<sup>17</sup> On account of which we also say, all the activity of merchants and indeed farmers cease, as is stated, and all of them are compelled to be occupied in the Churches, and rather to glorify God on this day of the Lord, in order that on it we the faithful see the light of the sun of righteousness. Neither the ones will serve in them working the baths' furnaces, waters and the rest, nor shall a faithful man be pardoned to abstain from prayer, who stands away from the greatly praised worship and teachings of the Lord's day, and who is devoted and occupied with warm waters, but he will be corrected according to episcopal discretion through penances.<sup>18</sup>

The question's reference to "danger" appears to recall John

of Chalcedon's seventeenth answer that stated, while bathing is not dangerous, nevertheless, it is not permitted. However, Balsamon's answer does not address the question of spiritual "danger" perhaps better covered in the canonist's twelfth response, but deals with the relationship between work and Sunday as a day of the Resurrection.

The concern is not for the preparation required to consecrate the Eucharistic elements or partake of communion. The focus is church attendance and diversions from the worship. The Emperor Leo IV's fifty-fourth novel deals with the prohibition of working on Sundays and does not make mention of the baths. Its citation in support of *alousia* appears to place working and bathing in the same category. In the context of Balsamon's answer, both are considered diversions that prevent the laity from being preoccupied with attending church. Indirectly, the Patriarch implies that public baths should be closed on Sundays in order that those "working... the furnaces, water and the rest" are able to attend the "worship and teachings of the Lord's day."<sup>19</sup> While his previous response indirectly dealt with the laity, the main focus of his answer here confines his discussion to bathing as a distraction from worship time, rather than any detailed description of its spiritual effects, as was the case for clergy. This difference of focus most probably reflects the canonist's concern for the purity of the priestly vessel and its capability for effectively transmitting divine grace. On the other hand, the concern for laity would be for their temporary detachment from worldly matters in order to be recipients of the Divine Mysteries and spiritual teachings.<sup>20</sup>

The question arises whether these canonical views were actually implemented in late Byzantium. These brief comments are not intended to be an exhaustive study of the issue, but to serve as a basis for further inquiry. In the fourteenth century, with a perspective on bathing, worship and the laity similar to Balsamon's responses, Patriarch

Athanasios I of Constantinople (October 1289 - October 1293; June 1303 - September 1309) recommended the closing of all public baths and taverns during Lent and on Sundays. For Lent, the Patriarch states in his *Letter 43* to the emperor Andronikos II Palaiologos (1282-1328), "I ask that the offerings of good deeds not be neglected, and especially at this time that all the baths and taverns in the capital be closed by an imperial command from Monday morning to Saturday morning, and that men, women and children should spend their time in the holy churches..."<sup>21</sup> Regarding Sundays, Athanasios states in his *Letter 44*:

Therefore, for the honor of the One Who has honored you, I request that you issue a solemn proclamation, conducive to the salvation of our souls, commanding that, from the hour of vespers on Saturday until Sunday, anyone who dares to keep his workshop open, or goes into a bathhouse or tavern for a drink, or who on any feast day of the Lord insults the solemn character of the day, should be punished.<sup>22</sup>

An attempt was made to implement these recommendations by Andronikos' imperial novel in 1306.<sup>23</sup> However, the Patriarch and this novel did not directly address the bathing of priests before celebration of the Liturgy.

The tenth canonical response of Ioasaph of Ephesos in the fifteenth century may reflect the normative practice:

10.

Whether the priest ought to bathe before the liturgy or after the liturgy?

And this is forbidden. For let him neither bathe before the liturgy or after the liturgy, but during the evening, and let him celebrate liturgy in the morning.<sup>24</sup>

If Ioasaph's answer is taken as representing at least an ideal, abstinence from bathing for the parish priest meant *alousia*



immediately before and after the Liturgy, with the stipulation that washing take place in the evening. However, the fact that a directive was required to remind priests not to bathe may indicate that despite the earlier imperial legislation *alousia* was not a practice of the parish clergy.

In conclusion, monastic *typika* reflected an ascetic tradition that viewed abstinence from bathing as an ascetic virtue consistent with self-denial, death to the world, and the promotion of spiritual progress. These *typika* associated *alousia* with the Church's fasting periods and variously allowed limited bathing. The late canonical responses of Theodore Balsamon, John Kastamonites and Ioasaph of Ephesos were addressed to parish and diocesan clergy and presupposed the possibility of their audience bathing before or after the celebration of the Eucharist. The prohibitions on bathing shared in common with the monastic *typika* the association of such abstinence with fasting. However, the fasting was not regarded as an element of an overall ascetic discipline, but as part of the preparation for celebration and reception of the Eucharist.

From the canonical viewpoint of Theodore Balsamon, the sensuality of bathing resulted in an enfeeblement that spiritually impaired prayer, celebration of the Mysteries and reception of the Eucharist. These effects were indirectly discussed in relation to the laity, whose bathing is treated by the same writer as a distraction from worship on Sundays in the same category as work. The diverse treatment of bathing for clergy and laity may be reflective of the main audience intended by the writers, but may also perhaps be emphasizing the higher standards necessary for a clergy to act in the role of divine mediators and as a spiritual elite. In addition, it may be speculated that limited *alousia* as a preparation for celebrating the Eucharist was also an attempt to temporarily conform married clergy to a higher spiritual elite; the monastic clergy being under the constant rigor of

a general ascetic discipline. Additional textual work will be required to determine whether these canonical views were actually implemented in Byzantium. Texts of the fourteenth and fifteenth century reveal that such *alousia* was presented at least as an ideal. In any case, it is a paradox that from a late Byzantine canonical perspective the more one is physically filthy, the more one may be spiritually purified; cleanliness was indeed not next to godliness.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Theodore Balsamon's canonical writings are contained in the first five volumes of G.A. Rhalles and M. Potles, *Σύνταγμα τῶν θείων καὶ ἱερῶν κανόνων*, 6 vols. (Athens: G. Chartophylax, 1852-1859) as well as in *P.G.*, pp. 137 and 138. For additional information and bibliography, see Patrick Viscuso, "Marital Relations in the Theology of the Byzantine Canonist Theodore Balsamon," *Ostkirchliche Studien* 39 (1989), pp. 281-288.

<sup>2</sup> V. Grumel, "Les réponses canoniques à Marc d'Alexandrie, leur caractère officiel, leur double rédaction," *Échos d'Orient*, 38 (1939), pp. 321-333. The version attributed to Balsamon (*Canonical Questions of the Most Holy Patriarch of Alexandria the Lord Mark and the Answers for them by the Most Holy Patriarch of Antioch, the Lord Theodore Balsamon*) may be found in Rhalles and Potles, vol. 4, pp. 447-496; and that attributed to John of Chalcedon (*A Work of the Most Holy Metropolitan of Chalcedon the Lord John on Ecclesiastical Questions. Questions of Mark, Pope of Alexandria, and Answers to them which were read in Synod during the Patriarchate of the Lord George Xiphilinos*) in *Ἐκκλησιαστικὴ Ἀλήθεια*, 39 (1915), pp. 169-173, 177-182, 185-189; for additional information on Kastamonites, see H.G. Beck, *Kirche und Theologische Literature im Byzantinischen Reich* (München: C.H. Beck'sche, 1959), p. 636.

<sup>3</sup> Information on Ioasaph is covered in my recent article, "Vampires, not Mothers: the Living Dead in the Canonical Responses of Ioasaph of Ephesos," *St. Vladimir's Theological Quarterly* 44 (2000), pp. 169-179. Since the publication of this article, I have obtained a copy of a critical edition and study of Ioasaph's works, see Alexander Korakides, *Ἰωάσαφ Ἐφέσου* (Athens: Nektarios Panagopoulos, 1992).

<sup>4</sup> For surveys on the Byzantine bath, see Albrecht Berger, *Das Bad in der Byzantinischen Zeit* (Munich: Institut für Byzantinistik und neu-

griechische Philologie, 1982); Cyril Mango, "Daily Life in Byzantium," *Jahrbuch der Österreichischen Byzantinistik* 31 (1981), vol. 1, pp. 337-354; Ann Wharton Epstein, "Popular and Aristocratic Cultural Trends in Byzance," Myriobiblos, *The Etext Library of the Church of Greece* ([http://www.myriobiblos.gr/texts/english/epstein\\_trends.html](http://www.myriobiblos.gr/texts/english/epstein_trends.html)).

<sup>5</sup> John Thomas and Angela Constantinides Hero, eds., *Byzantine Monastic Foundation Documents*, 5 vols. (Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks, 2000), vol. 2, p. 491.

<sup>6</sup> Thomas and Hero, *Byzantine Monastic Foundation Documents*, vol. 2, p. 748.

<sup>7</sup> G.E.H. Palmer, Philip Sherrard, Kallistos Ware, trans. and eds., *The Philokalia*, 4 volumes (London: Faber and Faber, 1979-1995), 3: 203.

<sup>8</sup> *The Philokalia*, 4: 27.

<sup>9</sup> *The Philokalia*, 1: 268.

<sup>10</sup> Korakides, p. 219.

<sup>11</sup> Rhalles and Potles, vol. 4, p. 457, vol. 4, p. 486.

<sup>12</sup> EA, p. 179.

<sup>13</sup> Rhalles and Potles, vol. 4, pp. 457-8; Balsamon incorporates an unrelated subject, bleeding of communicants from John of Chalcedon's question eighteen, "If one communes, should he be bled?" which immediately follows the Metropolitan's treatment of bathing.

<sup>14</sup> Eustathios of Thessalonike (ca. 1115-1195/96) terms bathing as a sign of slackness (βλακείας ἔνδειξις), G.L. F. Tafel, *Eustathii Opuscula* (Frankfurt am Main, 1832; rp. Amsterdam, 1964), p. 228, 49. While not making the connection to Balsamon, Berger provides an excellent discussion on Eustathios, Berger 67.

<sup>15</sup> In his commentary on Trullo 13, "They also added that these do not have indiscriminate intercourse with their spouses, but they separate from them at the time of their divine service, i.e., at times they exercise priestly functions..." Rhalles and Potles, vol. 4, p. 162.

<sup>16</sup> The association of *alousia* with the fasts of Great Lent, the Nativity and the Dormition is paralleled in late canonical writings dealing with marital life. According to the late canonist Theodore Balsamon, spouses are permitted martial relations only after the conclusion of Lenten fasts, Rhalles and Potles, 4: 485-6. In the case of third marriage, parallel to monastic bathing regulations of Evergetis these couples are permitted relations three times annually, on the feasts of the Nativity, Pascha, and Dormition, Rhalles and Potles, 4: 480.

<sup>17</sup> Leo the Wise, *Novel 54*, P. Noailles and A. Dain, *Les Nouvelles de Léon VI Le Sage* (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1944 ), pp. 204-7.

<sup>18</sup> Rhalles and Potles, vol. 4, pp. 486-7.

<sup>19</sup> The same perspective underlies Balsamon's commentary on canon

sixty-six of Trullo, which deals with the ceasing of all work and public diversions during Holy Week in order that the laity might “preoccupy themselves in the churches,” Rhalles and Potles, vol. 2, p. 461.

<sup>20</sup> For an analysis of late Byzantine thought regarding the priestly vessel, see Joseph J. Allen, ed., *Vested in Grace: Priesthood and Marriage in the Christian East* (Boston: Holy Cross Press, 2001), pp. 67-120.

<sup>21</sup> Athanasios I, *Letter 43*, Alice-Mary Talbot, ed. and trans., *The Correspondence of Athanasius I Patriarch of Constantinople* (Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks, 1975), p. 91; cf. also letter 42, pp. 86-89.

<sup>22</sup> Athanasios I, *Letter 44*, Talbot, p. 93.

<sup>23</sup> *Novel 26*, the text may be found in J. and P. Zepos *Jus Graeco-Romanum*, 8 vols. (Athens: 1931), vol. 1, pp. 533-535; see the discussion in Franz Dölger, *Regesten der Kaiserurkunden des Oströmischen Reiches, 4. Teil: Regesten von 1282-1341* (Berlin: C.H. Beck, 1960), 2295; for an excellent overview see Berger, p. 67.

<sup>24</sup> Korakides, p. 219.

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***Common Response to the Aleppo Statement  
on the Date of Easter/Pascha***

*North American Orthodox-Catholic  
Theological Consultation  
Washington, DC,  
October 31, 1998*

1. In March 1997, a consultation jointly sponsored by the World Council of Churches and the Middle East Council of Churches, meeting in Aleppo, Syria, issued a statement "Towards a Common Date for Easter." The North American Orthodox-Catholic Theological Consultation, meeting in Washington, DC, October 29-31, 1998, studied this Aleppo Statement and reviewed reactions to it thus far. Our Consultation strongly endorses the Aleppo Statement.

2. The Aleppo Statement rightly calls attention to the centrality of Christ's resurrection as the basis of our common faith. As "the ultimate expression of the Father's gift of reconciliation and unity in Christ through the Spirit," the resurrection "is a sign of the unity and reconciliation which God wills for the entire creation" (paragraph 5). Yet by celebrating the feast of Christ's resurrection, the Holy Pascha, or Easter, on different Sundays in the same year, "the churches give a divided witness" to this mystery, "compromising their credibility and effectiveness in bringing the Gospel to the world" (paragraph 1). The question of the date of Easter/Pascha, therefore, is not simply an academic issue, void of pastoral implications. It is a matter of concern in our own North American context. It has become an even more urgent

issue in some parts of the world such as the Middle East, where Christians constitute a divided minority in a larger non-Christian society.

3. After reviewing twentieth-century discussion of the question of a common date for Easter/Pascha and historical background to present differences of calculation among Christians, the Aleppo Statement recommends:

- maintaining the norms established by the First Ecumenical Council in Nicaea (325 AD), according to which Easter/Pascha should fall on the Sunday following the first full moon of spring, and
- calculating the necessary astronomical data (spring equinox and full moon) by "the most accurate possible scientific means," using the Jerusalem meridian as the basis for reckoning.

4. Noting that in the year 2001 the Paschal calculations now in use in our churches will coincide, the Aleppo Statement also recommends that, in the interval between now and then, the churches study and consider means to implement these recommendations.

5. Our Catholic-Orthodox Consultation welcomes the Aleppo Statement's recommendations for the following reasons:

- The Aleppo Statement does well to call attention to the continuing relevance of the Council of Nicaea – a fundamental point of reference for the traditions of both our churches – and in so doing, to reject proposals to establish a fixed date for Easter/Pascha.
- As the Aleppo Statement points out, the Council of Nicaea was willing to make use of contemporary science to calculate the date of Easter/Pascha. We believe that this principle still holds valid today. Scientific observations about the cosmos reveal the goodness and wonder of God's creation, which He embraced in the Incarnation of His Son. Moreover, to deny an observable truth about the world is to reject God's gift to

us. As they witness to God's love for the world, our churches need to use the findings of contemporary science as did the Fathers of Nicaea.

- The Aleppo Statement accurately presents historical circumstances relating to such matters as the Council of Nicaea's treatment of the relationship between the Christian Pascha and the Jewish Passover. The practice of continuing to celebrate Pascha according to the ancient Julian calendar has often been defended, by some Eastern Christians, as resting on a decision associated with that council prohibiting the churches from celebrating the Paschal feast "with the Jews." As scholars of both our traditions have very clearly demonstrated, this prohibition was directed against making the calculation of the date of Easter depend upon contemporary Jewish reckoning, not against a coincidence of date between the two festivals. In fact, a coincidence of Passover and Easter dates continued to occur from time to time as late as the eighth century. Only later, when the increasing "lag" of the Julian Calendar made any coincidence impossible, did the prohibition come to be misinterpreted as meaning that the Jewish Passover must necessarily precede the Christian Passover each year.

- In short, we consider that the implementation of the recommendations of the Aleppo Statement would allow our churches to adhere more exactly to the mode of calculation mandated by the First Council of Nicaea.

6. As the Aleppo Statement indicates, its recommendations will have different implications for our churches "as they seek a renewed faithfulness to Nicaea." For the Eastern churches, "changes in the actual dating of Easter/Pascha will be more perceptible than for the Western churches" (paragraph 13). The fact that the recommendations of the Aleppo Statement substantially repeat proposals already developed by the Orthodox themselves in connection with their preparations for a Great and Holy Council of the Orthodox Church



should significantly enhance the Aleppo recommendations' prospects for success. At the same time, as the Aleppo Statement notes, in many of the Eastern churches adherence to their present method of calculation often has been a symbol of the Church's integrity and freedom from the hostile forces of this world. Implementation of the Aleppo recommendations in these circumstances must proceed carefully and with great pastoral sensitivity. The material presented in the Aleppo Statement can be of great help to these churches should they attempt to carry out this effort to be faithful to the great tradition of the Church.

7. The Aleppo Statement is faithful to the decisions of the First Ecumenical Council regarding the date of Easter/Pascha. At the same time, it takes into account the contemporary situation, which calls for a common witness to the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ, the central mystery of the Christian faith. Our consultation therefore urges our churches to give serious consideration to its recommendations.

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**Encyclical**  
**The Standing Conference Of Orthodox Bishops**  
**On September 11, 2001**

To all the clergy and laity of the Holy Orthodox Church throughout America,

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and the God of all consolation, who consoles us in our affliction, so that we may be able to console those who are in any affliction with the consolation which we ourselves are consoled by God. (2 Cor 1:3-4).

In the spirit of these God-inspired words of St. Paul, we address this letter to you in this time of great affliction. As we are all painfully aware, our nation has experienced one of the most difficult days in its history. The death of over five thousand of our fellow citizens and citizens of over eighty other countries on September 11th, 2001 is a profound tragedy which will be forever etched in our memories.

For many of us, the violent events of that day have deep personal consequences which will endure throughout this life. The families and friends of the victims are also themselves innocent victims and are grieving over the loss of their loved ones. The consequences of terrorism in New York, Washington, and Shanksville will continue to affect each of us and our national life in the days, the months and the years

\* Editor's Note: The number of victims has been set at 2996.

ahead, and will cause many questions to trouble our souls.

As Orthodox Christians, we have the resources available to provide answers for our own souls and to strengthen those around us. Putting our trust in the God of love and hope and reconciliation, we receive comfort in knowing that the risen Christ has overcome death and that the Evil One does not have the final word. God has the final word, and He is always with us. Yes, God is always with us in both our joys and in our sorrows. Resting in God's love we can share the strength that this brings us with those who are troubled and even terrified by the threat of evil.

Confronted by this evil, we have been overwhelmed by the example of the good men and women who have put themselves at risk to save, to protect and to heal the lives of others. Think of the firefighters, police, clergy, counselors, doctors, nurses, emergency medical personnel and others who placed their own lives in jeopardy. Indeed, we now know that many knowingly gave their lives to save the lives of their fellow citizens. Their sacrifice reminds us of the words of our Lord: No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends (John 15:13). We can also point to the profound generosity, both spiritual and material, which Americans have shown in response to overwhelming human grief, suffering and need.

As Orthodox hierarchs, we are acutely mindful that we are mandated by our theological vision, our spiritual convictions and our pastoral duties to look deeply into the meaning of the challenges faced by our government and our political leaders and representatives. We believe that the United States and the international community must seek the moral and political wisdom to build a world in which justice and tolerance and peace are established. All the disenfranchised and impoverished people of the world, must have the same opportunities we have for a good and productive life.

For our part, the response to all fear must be our contin-

ued growth in the love of God and one another. To work for justice, tolerance and peace will give testimony to the overcoming of fear. We must continue to pray and care for one another, to be compassionate and generous. We must give thanks to God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, who comforts us in our times of difficulties and strengthens us with His love. We must trust in Him who is the help of the helpless, the hope of the hopeless, the Savior of those cast about, the haven of those who are lost, and the physician of our souls and bodies (Liturgy of St. Basil).

Let us continue to remember in our prayers those who died on September 11, 2001. May our good and loving Lord grant rest to the innocent victims in a place of light and a place of peace, and may their memory be eternal. We ask that our parish priests offer memorial prayers on October 21, 2001 to remember those who lost their lives as victims of the terrorist attacks and as courageous and self-sacrificial rescue workers.

Remembering the God of consolation, may we offer the families and friends who have lost loved ones comfort in this time of sorrow. Remembering the God of healing, may we enable those who have been wounded whether in body or in spirit to find strength and assistance. Remembering the God of compassion, may we be compassionate to one another in our affliction. To offer consolation, healing and compassion, each one of us needs to make time available to be with those in need.

Let us be especially concerned with the well-being of our children and young people during these uncertain times. As they seek greater security and care, may we respond to them as loving parents, teachers, counselors and priests.

May all our public servants and those who protect us and defend us in the military be blessed with prudence and courage both now and in the days ahead.

As Orthodox Christians and as citizens of this nation, we

are challenged to reassert our dependency upon God who is the source of life and happiness; to reaffirm our relationships with one another as well as our devotion to the common good of our neighborhood, our city and our nation; to renew our commitment to the essential values of this country.

May we all receive from the Father of all mercy and the God of consolation the strength and the wisdom to meet the challenges and needs of the days to come.

To Christ our Lord be glory, together with His eternal Father and the all holy, good, and life-creating Spirit, now and forever. Amen.

+Archbishop Demetrios, Chairman  
Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America

+Metropolitan Philip, Vice Chairman  
Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese of North America

+Metropolitan Joseph, Secretary  
Bulgarian Eastern Orthodox Church

+Metropolitan Nicholas, Treasurer  
American Carpatho-Russian Diocese of the U.S.A.

+ Metropolitan Theodosius  
Orthodox Church in America

+ Metropolitan Joseph, Locum Tenens  
Romanian Orthodox Archdiocese in America and Canada

+ Metropolitan Christopher  
Serbian Orthodox Church in the U.S.A. and Canada

+ Metropolitan Constantine  
Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the U.S.A

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## **Fortress Forever at the Ready : The Jewish Ethos in the Byzantine Mind and Its Ruthenian Translation**

JAMES WEISS

Before them lay the abyss of Muslim conquest and behind them, the tepid palliative of Christian brotherhood. With agonizing keenness, the Byzantine delegates at the Council of Ferrara-Florence (1437-9) knew well the veracity of their situation that compelled their solicitation for papal union and hope for “brotherly support” in the form of troops as the only means for sustaining their church and empire.<sup>1</sup> At best, their efforts were vainglorious. The fortress of empire was crumbling, the outworks had been overrun, the rubble ever-mounting, and Othman’s siege engines were preparing for the final assault. The body that had once been the Byzantine Empire was terminal. Notice of its death and burial would simply be a matter of time, but it also had a soul and it was this aspect of being that had a viable bid for immortality. Though in its political twilight, Byzantium had, nevertheless, succeeded in implanting its theological and philosophical ethos in other lands and shaping their respective miens. Orthodox Christian missionaries had ensured that there would be a *Byzantium after Byzantium* as Nikolai Iorga contended and yet even that realization enjoyed imperfect pleasure among the Byzantine intelligentsia.

Fraught with episodic setbacks, Byzantine missions to the Slavs, and the Ruthenians in particular, had made a profound impact. Marring these efforts, however, was the millenary problem of what to do about the Jews. Casting aside the su-



perstitious and emotional flotsam which had accrued over the ages, the "Jewish problem" was a theological, philosophical and intellectual issue. Without satisfactory resolution to the obstacles presented by Jewish theology and Christian religion, the achievement of Christian distinctiveness, let alone a "new covenant," was a tenuous one. Matthean and Johannine communities had approached this issue and had come away dissatisfied and the question remained: How was it possible to establish a purely Christian church steeped in Jewish traditions but compelled to reject Jewish institutions?<sup>2</sup> Upon inheriting it, the Byzantine intelligentsia succeeded in making this Gordian knot even tighter and then exported it along with the accumulated emotional baggage to the Slavic world. Even before this event, Orthodox intellectuals, from philosophers and solitary aesthetes to occupants of high ecclesiastical office had expended copious amounts of reason and rationale in their attempts to effect a measure of concord. Theological and philosophical reticence proscribed aggressive approaches and innovations owing to the risk of inspiring heresy which Orthodox Christianity could not admit in any degree. Fear of broad and flexible forensics certainly had its place in Byzantine history as well as its consequences.<sup>3</sup> Constantine's first Khazar mission, for instance, was considered a failure owing to the debating skills of the Jewish representatives, a grudging admission made with little animosity. Perhaps, like St. Paul, the Byzantine Orthodox Church was incapable of hating the Jews on philosophical grounds because, like Pauline Christianity, Pharisaic Judaism was at its very core.<sup>4</sup> The rabbinical Judaism of Rabbi ben Zakkhai at Yavneh was inconsequential to Orthodoxy since it was "outside the walls" whereas the Pauline version made up the very brick and mortar. Centuries of accommodation, obfuscation, declarations of victory and longstanding truces created a profusion of competing philo-Jewish and anti-Jewish impulses within Orthodox theology and allied philosophical

endeavors which was imparted to the Ruthenians who sat at their teachers' feet.

The immediate question is just what did the majority of Byzantine clerics and missionaries "know" of the Jewish antecedents to Christianity prior to conveying their knowledge to the Ruthenians and how was it presented to them? What was the inspiration, for example, behind John Chrysostom's forceful plaint that he hated the synagogue because it possessed the Law and put it to outrageous use?<sup>5</sup> In a more dispassionate vein, he asserted that since the Jews had been dispossessed, their rituals were invalid, yet God allowed for their maintenance as a guard against falling into idolatry.<sup>6</sup> Curiously, St. John, not unlike some of his predecessors, was wedded to the notion that the Christian covenant of grace had supplanted the Jewish one of law and yet a measure of uncertainty remained. More will be made of this later. To conclude this present line, Chrysostom admitted openly his illiteracy in Hebrew which may have been a consequence of his distaste for speculative theology. Disposed towards pastoral action and the recognition of human limits, a quality he embraced emphatically as evinced in his works, this was not a man who would take knotty theological issues in the teeth. Both his *Discourses* and *Baptismal Catechisms* revealed a fear-ridden man seeing himself adrift in tumultuous seas struggling to secure a grasp upon an absolute certainty no matter how slim. In this way, he was able to realize a unique, parochial and perfect orthodoxy with longstanding consequences.<sup>7</sup> Though Byzantine Christians would have been acquainted with various traditions such as that of Pachomias, which stressed literacy and intellectual craft, it was also true that a commitment to literacy and educational mission within the Byzantine monastic world had become less prominent in later centuries.<sup>8</sup> Coupled with this retreat of sorts, which by no means was monolithic, was an observation advanced in the *Epistle of Barnabas*, which found advocacy

with Chrysostom, that if the Temple of Solomon was rebuilt, Judaism would present a strong alternative to Christianity.<sup>9</sup> From the second century onward, the battle lines had been delineated but not always clarified. Vicissitudes in posture and demeanor among various Orthodox thinkers and aesthetes paint an unusual picture which evoke the image of a fortress used in both offensive and defensive modes simultaneously.

### **Transmissions of Hope and Fear**

Orthodox missionaries had been quite diligent in translating both dogma and popular notions to ears of varying attendance. Longevity, more than the presentation of a complete theology, was at the heart of their activities. Beset with heresies real and imagined, the parent Byzantine Empire sought immortality in begetting children, Orthodox Christian communities who would maintain the faith long after the political Empire had passed on. The Slavs, specifically the Ruthenians, promised fair soil for cultivation, but even in such an inviting field, the Orthodox conveyance of Greek Christianity would not be without some variation. Instruction came by myriad routes through Khazar, Bohemian, Moravian and Bulgarian intermediaries who succeeded in placing them within the Greek fold while making them Greek Christians of varying sorts. This was to be expected, since innovations in order of service and certain celebrations were common owing to local needs and how and to what degree they had been "educated."<sup>10</sup> Reactions in Constantinople over such heterodoxy waxed and waned with circumstance; after all, clerical and secular officials had their own difficulties with one another. Even so, amidst the tides of liberality and conservatism, the Byzantine Church prior to 1453 could not divest itself entirely of the notion that dilapidation was immanent where so much as one deviant "stone" existed. This

was a crucial impulse in its rationale. Heresy and heterodoxy were synonymous; for example, Paulicians were identified as Manichees and even Muslims since they were found from time to time in their forces.<sup>11</sup> Later on, they would be identified as Jews. As heretical movements arose or came to the attention of individual Byzantine clerics and the Church as a body and seen as a threat, "Jew" became a generalized label arising from the need for and frustrations over Orthodox Christian independence within the strictures of Jewish theology. Judaizing, the act of converting Christians to Judaism was, at best, an episodic and localized phenomenon and yet groups such as the Paulicians and Bogomils were accused of its prosecution. Not even the Slavs were left out of the fray since the Slavic recension of the Book of Enoch, specifically 2 Enoch 34:1, made clear the consequences of deviations from Orthodoxy.<sup>12</sup> It also evinced the complexity of the matter. New ground was always held precariously and even more so when the "old" bore the appearance of shifting sand. That consequence notwithstanding, to newly-converted Christians the "right" path was often obscured. Truth be told, not even the shepherds were at complete ease. Possessing the coveted dignity of being the vestry of the New Testament was a burdensome maintenance with few immediate rewards, constant vigilance, and no promise that all of these labors and sacrifices would make the establishment of Orthodoxy more than a vainglorious entertainment.<sup>13</sup>

### **A Show of Strength to Remedy All Uncertainties**

Arguments of Law and Grace aside, reconstitution of the primitive Church invested with apostolic purity was a psychological albeit motive fiction advanced in the literature and an element in Orthodox missionary activities with an Old Testament bent.<sup>14</sup> Though the documentation from the period is not as complete as would be desired, it is plain that

even Paul appeared to believe that the object of such a quest was futile and that one had to be content with the best efforts possible. It would not be incomprehensible to surmise that more than a few Orthodox intellectuals arrived at this position well in advance of 1453, but how many were willing to appreciate it fully or embrace the attendant consequences to claims of theological Christian "purity?" Also, there was the question of philosophical reception among missionaries and local clerics. Such an intellectual overhaul and the philosophical, not to mention the theological, fallout would have been tantamount to abandoning one's defenses in the face of one's adversaries. There were too many risks and no promise that the instability created by such a "reform" could ever be restored. The situation had to remain as it stood. An examination of some hagiographic accounts and Ruthenian primers reveal a zealous and legalistic compulsion to follow established dicta to the letter. Deviation, regardless of will and intent, was seen as an unforgivable sin. Conceded, this ardency was not uniform, yet it served to deepen divisions within the Byzantine Ecclesia and inspired a paranoia that doctrinal difference from any quarter was an assault upon Orthodox provinces. Placing itself on a war footing was a natural consequence. Intellectually, the Church was at war with itself over doctrinal imperfections which would, logically, make the outside world appear hostile if not sanguinary, a vision of so many predatory birds waiting to strike or scavengers biding their time for a ready meal.

Fear and intransigence led to strange manufactures. One such product was the evolution of an unusual calculus whereby success was measured in terms of varying degrees of failure. To illustrate, it was recorded that ninth-century Kazaria and Bohemia still had resident heretics and Jews despite the best efforts of Constantine the Philosopher.<sup>15</sup> A partial victory was no victory at all. Even advances among the Bulgarians, Czechs and Ruthenians were of little comfort as

were the omnipresent concerns over “balancing the powers” with Rome. This last issue alone attenuated clerical confidence, denied them any lasting sense of well being, and had a profound influence upon the content and character of their instruction. Eventually, what emerged was a rationale where individuals and groups were either placed “within the fortress manning the battlements” or without it. Heretics, Jews and other enemies of truth were adept at conversion, and Orthodox missionaries were believed to be no less skilled in the art. Just because a group fell outside did not preclude them from salvation, but this largesse was a limited offering. Should they evince the slightest steadfastness in their theological errors, they were considered adversaries in the most profound sense.

### **Walling Oneself into a Corner: The Meaning of Orthodox Christianity**

By transforming the city of Byzantium into Constantinople in 330 with the added honorific of “New Rome,” Constantine imagined his namesake creation to be nothing less than the new and uncorrupted seat of Christianity.<sup>16</sup> To entertain a lesser dignity was out of the question and yet this “blessing” was the source of much grumbling and cursing. Disputes with Rome over prestige of place were endless,<sup>17</sup> but more so than disputing where and on which stone Christ placed his foot, Byzantine clerics were compelled by their founder’s mandate to discover, formulate and broadcast the original (i.e., *generis in locis*) and “unadorned” dicta of the original Christian church.<sup>18</sup> It was a Herculean task with Sisyphean results. Discovery and formulation proved futile since inherent heterodox elements invalidated even the pretense of doctrinal homogeneity, let alone one of chthonic origins.<sup>19</sup> Many battles theological, intellectual and physical had been waged over the centuries, but complete victory on all fronts

remained elusive. Regarding the first two, even a well-reasoned truce was accounted a failure since God's faith could only prevail in the face of error.<sup>20</sup> Translating irrational remorse over this fundamental shortcoming into theological and intellectual terms, Byzantine missionaries impressed this angst upon the communities they visited which, consequently, influenced their respective metaphysical developments. As for the suffering saints responsible, they were accorded a peculiar accommodation. Though ever fearful of deviation, these clerics did possess the means to extricate themselves. Philosophically, truth was relative, and if it happened to be slightly imperfect, the sin would have been venial at worst if it produced a "good" end. Specifically, ecclesiastical authorities and intellectuals were concerned with building a Christian community which, as Maximus (seventh century) declared, "the Savior established as the saving confession of faith."<sup>21</sup> With this and similar testimonials, especially didactic ecclesiastical histories, promoting the illusion of an "immaculately-conceived" Church to those whom they sought to convert in full knowledge that it was not, could hardly be considered a sin. Should some parties attempt to expose this increasingly elaborate ruse, their disclosures could be obfuscated and undermined by emphasizing their real and alleged "errors." From the fourth century until the Empire's dissolution eleven centuries later and even beyond, a vocal segment of Orthodox Christianity believed itself at odds with every religious faith and movement outside of itself and virtually democratized the condition of the Church Militant.<sup>22</sup> Every one of the faithful was under arms.<sup>23</sup>

The influences of the Alexandrian and Antiochene schools served to make circumstances more volatile. The former was the birthplace of the Septuagint and hosted the 'allegorical school' of biblical interpretation. Within certain prescription, scholars sought deeper meaning to the psalms and parables by examining the layers of meaning and through

comparative literatures. Contrasting these endeavors was the Antiochene Literalist School which, by its very title, required little elaboration as to its posture.<sup>24</sup> Pharisaic sympathies would have been with Alexandria, while those of the Sadducees would have found company with Antioch. The parallels were striking. Though forensics akin to those within the Alexandrian school were not unknown to the Byzantine clergy, disputations were far less numerous than those conducted in the West since the Byzantine rite had its origins in Antioch. It was there that the name "christian" was first used and a rigid tradition of exegesis evolved and became firmly established.<sup>25</sup> Still, this does not mitigate the fact that some Byzantine ecclesiastical scholars were prisoners of their own fears.<sup>26</sup> For example, a sizable portion of Greek philosophy and mythology was proscribed from study owing to the potential for pagan revival. Such concerns had left the Western Church in the fifth century, whereas in the East they persisted as late as the eleventh.<sup>27</sup> Insecurities and ignorance fed one another, and those ensconced within this climate anathematized Arians, Bogomils, Paulicians and hosts of others who stubbornly stood outside the walls and resisted immediate capitulation.

### **What is to be Apocryphal and What is to be Apocalyptic?: What is Useful and What is Inimical?**

Both Byzantine and Roman ecclesiastics made fair use of canonical and non-canonical works, though care was taken as to what should be revealed to the community of believers and what should stay hidden.<sup>28</sup> Widespread illiteracy in Hebrew and Aramaic kept most of the "seductive" works out of vulgar reach, which afforded some comfort to concerned clerics even though vernacular translations of proscribed works were extant. Be that as it may, there remained the realization that with every refinement made to the Christian Canon



the debt owed to Jewish antecedents loomed all the larger. In recognition of this and in the interests of organizational and doctrinal integrity, the Old Testament Canon was closed at the synod of Jamnia (90-100). A century later, the New Testament was afforded the same service.<sup>29</sup> By no means did this curb the spirit of intellectual inquiry among scholars determined to discover the bare veracities of God's sanctioned institution. Eastern Christian theologians in particular made liberal use of Jewish, Jewish Christian and pagan apocryphal works, a practice not altogether welcome among their more reticent colleagues.<sup>30</sup> In attendance at the Council of Nicaea, a body of conservative bishops stated emphatically that "the faith of God should be received without curious inquiries."<sup>31</sup> Indeed, this position was reiterated time and again not only to remind "straying" churchmen of their spiritual loyalties but also to condition the corporate mind of the Church. A common motif in Byzantine hagiography which supported this disposition was that of the illiterate saint who was guided to perform great deeds solely by Divine inspiration. In the western Christian tradition, this was described as the simplicity of the soul governed by *Kynde Wit*.<sup>32</sup> Reinforcing that ideal in the east, Symeon the New Theologian (949-1022) declared that the Holy Spirit never visited men who studied Greek works or practiced the art of eloquent speaking.<sup>33</sup>

Greek literature may have offered too many options for reticent dispositions. Not the least of its unsavory characteristics was that it had been the language of the educated in the Roman Empire, which made it appear to some as a vehicle of latent pagan casuistry and, potentially, apostasy. Closer to the mark, some of the more potent philosophical mechanics of Christian theology were found in the works of Plato and Aristotle. The language of the *Septuagint* and the New Testament could not be discounted but, graciously, it was a *koine*. A measure of control, if only chimeral, could be had within the purview of Orthodox Christianity if only this

same Greek was not the *lingua franca* of a number of proximate Jewish groups such as the Ebionites of Transjordan. All that was known of them was that they were a community of Jewish Christians extant in the first and second centuries who, in their version of the Christian testaments, denied the virgin birth and omitted locusts from John the Baptist's diet owing to their own vegetarianism.<sup>34</sup> Clerical authorities could excuse the latter since it did not compromise Christian belief, but as for denying the immaculate conception and birth, a notion the Ebionites considered ludicrous, this was more grave.<sup>35</sup> Such was the danger of free interpretation and expostulation. Within the western Christian tradition, such proliferation inspired Cromatius and Heliodorus, both bishops, to write to Jerome in the 360s about the possibility of translating the more "orthodox" testaments from Hebrew into Latin. Appended to the Gospel of Pseudo-Matthew, the missal's correspondents presented their case. At its core was the contention that translating certain "noble but non-canonical works counteracted the craft of heretics," which was a more immediate concern than ascertaining the deeds of Christ. What is singularly arresting about this letter is the penultimate line:

... in order to teach bad doctrine, they (heretics) have mingled their lies in with the excellent nativity of Christ that they may hide the bitterness of death under the sweetness of life.<sup>36</sup>

Although melodramatic, it nevertheless expressed a growing concern for the doctrinal integrity and veracity of Christianity. No less concerned about these deviations were Byzantine authorities. Early on it was attested that the profusion of doctrines and practices acted as a deterrent to many from embracing Christianity in any form.<sup>37</sup> In a precarious balance was Christianity's corporate integrity, and if the Church was to survive in succeeding centuries, a definitive core had to be established.

### **The Bible as it Should Have Been: Orthodoxy Attempting Self-Construction**

The quest for a unique Christian definition resembled a hybrid of the fates which befell Tantalus and Sisyphus. Invested with an unquenchable thirst for Christian truth, the stream seemed forever dry, and after laboriously reconstructing time and again what was thought to be the "primitive church," the edifice fell asunder and work had to begin anew. Desperate to break the cycle in the West, Pope Damasus, in the 370's, commissioned Jerome and scholars of his choosing to compose the common books of faith, the *Biblia Vulgata*, which was thought to put an end to all errors concerning the faith for all time. A little over twelve hundred years later in the Orthodox sphere, the *Ostryz'ka biblia* (1581) was assembled under the direction of Duke Constantine of Ostroh. Its uniqueness lay in that it was the most complete compilation of scriptures to date, particularly with regard to the Old Testament, which promised to crystallize Orthodox dogma. Employment of the *Septuagint* was an obvious step, but in terms of relating precisely Mosaic, Levitical and Deuteronomical precepts, a curious anomaly came to the fore.

In its own right the *Septuagint* poses some interesting questions since it bears some consequence in the formation of the *Ostryz'ka biblia*. The principal query is the accuracy of this Greek translation of the Torah and the prophetic books in relation to the Hebrew originals.<sup>38</sup> The operative fiction was that the seventy-two rabbis who composed it from memory and secluded from one another were possessed (*enthusion-tes*) by the Divine Will and under its inspiration (*proeptaetion* i.e. prophetic) produced a holy work.<sup>39</sup> Koine Greek had been the vernacular of the Alexandrian Jewish community which, owing to widespread assimilation, had either forgotten Hebrew or knew it rudimentarily. Anomalies in terms

of omissions and mistranslation were inevitable and, not surprisingly, would find their way into the *Ostryz'ka biblia*. That realization, along with the availability of the Hebrew texts to the Ostroh scholars, would account for some of the imperfection in their work, but there is one which simply cannot be discounted.

Consulting *Torah*, specifically Exodus (*Shemot*) 20:20, God's prohibition to the Jews regarding the making of images "either of me or anything that is with me" is explicit.<sup>40</sup> Anyone familiar with the traditions of Torah scholarship will note that the repetition of a phrase, in this instance, *lo ta'asun* (do not fashion), twice or more is indicative of an emphatic imperative. In the *Septuagint* it is only the latter proscription, that against fashioning idols of gold and silver for the purposes of sacrifice and worship, which made it into Greek translation.<sup>41</sup> On this evidence alone, it could be surmised that the *Septuagint*'s composers were either ignorant of the antecedent or careless, but the anomaly did not end there. In Deuteronomy 5:8-9 where this double prohibition is reiterated, ignorance is ruled out.<sup>42</sup> One scribe remedying the mistakes of another would have been merely part of the work, but why then was this correction not reflected in the *Ostryz'ka biblia*? That the omission in Exodus 20:23 would have made its way into this later text might very well have been a consequence of conservative scribes invested with imperfect texts. Even so, this still does not explain why in Exodus 20:4 of the *LXX* where the ban on Divine images is clear that this proscription is absent in the *Ostroh* as well as in Deuteronomy 5:8-9. Any attempt to prove *mens rea* would be unedifying.<sup>43</sup> Realistically, all that can be surmised is that this particular lacuna allowed the Orthodox Church considerable flexibility in terms of devising icons for the purpose of converting pagans to Orthodox Christianity.

Laboring under a "useful ignorance," Orthodox Christian prelates from priests to bishops were able to show cherubim,

seraphim, Christ, and almost anything within the Vault of Heaven which accrued considerable converts to the faith and substantiated their education thereafter.<sup>44</sup> If indeed they erred in God's sight, the end, the salvation of pagans from perdition, justified the means. Yes, it was true that Christ claimed not to discount the (old) law but to complete it, which meant that going against it was a sin and, logically, counterproductive to realizing Orthodoxy.<sup>45</sup> A plausible counter to this might have been that the crucifixion annulled all obligations to Old Testament prescription and proscriptions, though the argument would have been of limited capital. Icon-making illustrated the sort of elastic legalism which bred casuistry and one of the "sins" which Byzantine clerics accused their Roman counterparts of committing.<sup>46</sup>

Hypocrisy would have been fatal to Orthodoxy's mission to re-establish apostolic purity. In an effort to mitigate this sin, some of the Church's intelligentsia emphasized the need for scriptural integrity. Gregory of Nazianzus suggested that those works incapable of apostolic verification be placed in a subordinate position to those contained in the canon, but then there was the problem of multiple recensions in both testaments. Cyril of Jerusalem, believing that he had surmounted a rather thorny impasse, insisted that books excluded from the canon should not be studied even in private by the ecclesiastical intelligentsia lest their stamina prove pliant to heterodox impulses. Desperate to bring this matter to an immediate close, Athanasius's Easter Letter of 367 accepted the twenty-seven books that made up the New Testament and declared the Biblical canon for both testaments closed. Shoring up one sluice induced another to gush forth. Vigorous intellects remained insatiate in light of facile and incomplete answers. For centuries to come, the "battle of the books" would thrive, go into seclusion, and emerge ever more vibrant, which meant that Byzantine Orthodoxy would be forever ignorant of a good night's sleep.<sup>47</sup>

Apocryphal books had the potential to raise uncomfortable issues. Consider the *Books of Enoch*, especially the second (Slavic) translation extant in two recensions that challenged the belief that God had only one son.<sup>48</sup> What is immediately apparent is that, unlike First Enoch (Hebrew), there was no mention of the fallen watchers (angels) who were all male and, logically, had claims to God's paternity.<sup>49</sup> Had this knowledge been open, Christ's divinity would have been diminished dramatically, the virgin birth rendered peripheral, and the mystery of the Trinity incredible. In I Enoch 6-15, the Watchers, the lowest ranked of the angelic host, "entered into women like men and begat giants."<sup>50</sup> How could it be explained that "perfect beings," divinely conceived and born, produced evil? Plato contended that evil was merely spoiled good but then he was not trying to make the case for Christian rationalism. Compounding difficulties was the pluralization of God's patrimony since these Watchers were his sons. Either by imperfect translation or a desire to get on with the "more important" aspects of Enoch's tale, that is the tour of the seven heavens culminating with a visit to the Celestial Throne, the antecedent chapters in I Enoch were absent in II Enoch. For the most part, both recensions emphasized the journey of Enoch, a proto-Elijah figure whose righteousness found favor with God who allowed him to travel to His throne while still living so that he could relate these glories to other mortals.

Apocryphal literature was akin to fire; it could prove quite useful in the manufacture of theology and the propagation of faith or it could consume the edifice of the Church. There was also the impulse to make the apocryphal apocalyptic. More plainly, being Orthodox compelled the Church intelligentsia to decipher all literature touching upon Christian theology and reveal it only to a trusted and sober esoteric enclave. That ignorance of the inner meanings of some of these hidden works enveloped even them was an ignominy-

ous realization. Even more humiliating would have been the revelation of the Divine essence from a rival group, whether it was Jewish, Jewish Christian or Catholic.

### **The Heir not so Apparent**

Orthodox hegemony over the Ruthenians was imperative to the Church's philosophical survival, though the means by which that conquest would be brought about and provisions for its continued maintenance were hardly straightforward. Bulgaria and Poland, no less than Bohemia and Moravia, supplied tutors who schooled them in Christianity, often not to the tastes of Constantinople. What could be done? Even at its height, the Patriarch and his subalterns could not prevent variations or nullify their influences effectively. For his part, St. Cyril provided the Christian communities of eastern and central Europe with an *oikonomia* (a plan of salvation) which was concomitant with Emperor Michael III's pragmatic endeavor to bind the Ruthenians within the Byzantine sphere. The Church would certainly benefit from the anticipated edification, but more so than saving souls for Christ was the conservation of prestige and territorial security, both of which were on the wane. Possibly, it was thought, fortune's tide could be reversed though an "army" of theological loyalists, but this bordered on the fantastic. The Ruthenians had no way of knowing the antecedents and implications behind their "deliverance."<sup>51</sup>

Was that ignorance as pragmatic as it was mutual? Did the typical Orthodox missionary possess the breadth of historical knowledge and current affairs to inform his Ruthenian neophytes as to the belligerent, albeit theological, nature of their enlistment in the cause of Christ? Clearly, there would have been no capital in laying bare one's insecurities in alien climes. Furthermore, an answer of any merit, let alone completeness, would require an investigation into the education-

al credentials of every Orthodox prelate and learned layman whoever ventured into the Wild Fields (i.e. Ruthenia) on errand, an endeavor which could not be brought off satisfactorily if at all. What is known, however, is that from the eighth century onward Turkish encroachments were a real political threat and, on occasion, Byzantine clerics found themselves in a defensive position in justifying their faith to their Muslim opponents. Constantine himself supposedly debated with Muslims at the court of Samarra.<sup>52</sup> Lacking military forces, the Jews nevertheless posed similar challenges, as seen in the supposed disputes between them and Sergius the Stylite and Jacob of Sarug, along with legions of ancient Greek philosophers, heretics and others who were seen, at times, as agents of the Antichrist. Within this peculiar mental world, Jews enjoyed a prominence and placement that made them revered and reviled in turns. Physical immediacy with the Christian population and intellectual influence were inevitable results of a flourishing trade that kept the Mediterranean economy viable. Constantinople, owing to its geographical situation, was at the hub of this activity and attracted myriad Jewish merchants, and though their commercial benefit could not be discounted, Byzantine clerics were uneasy.<sup>53</sup> In terms of cultivating a Christian community where everyone accepted articles of faith and mandates from the clergy unquestioningly, Jewish freedom was a problem. Some emperors sought to limit Jewish movements within the Empire but rarely did their policies mar Jewish international enterprise appreciably.<sup>54</sup> What is all the more striking is that it was a well-known habit among Jewish merchants to confine their peregrinations to other Jewish communities, but along with commercial exchanges came intellectual ones which invariably found circulation beyond Jewish quarters.<sup>55</sup> The Ashkenazim tended to be insular and suspicious of outsiders whereas the Sephardim in Constantinople and other cities throughout the Empire were more open to anyone wishing



to engage them in either study or forensic disputation. In comparison to what the Jews had experienced in Spain and in much of Europe terms of Christian intercourse, even at the height of the Inquisition, Byzantine contacts were more guarded but not altogether closed. Be that as it may, clerical concern was marked.<sup>56</sup> Jews and Turks did not ascribe to the true faith and therefore were seen as enemies to Orthodoxy, but not quite in the same vein.<sup>57</sup> Turkish advances upon the Empire made them the physical enemy in the first instance; their theological forays were generally secondary and contained within a separate sphere. As tensions mounted between the Caliph and the Byzantine Emperor, intercourse between Arab and Christian businessmen and travelers became more restrictive, while Jewish commerce proceeded with relative ease.<sup>58</sup> Simmering tempers finally came to a boil and overflowed during the Iconoclast Controversy (717-843), in the aftermath of which the monk-dominated Byzantine ecclesiastical hierarchy assumed a more ardent conservative posture where any challenge from any quarter, no matter how slight, was viewed as an assault.

Jews, though often associated with Turks in the Byzantine imagination, were more immediate in terms of theology, intellectual acumen, and even culture, which made them appear to be the greater threat from within as well as from without. Living in seclusion, absorbed in millenia-old issues and conflicts with almost no knowledge of affairs outside of their cenobia, Jewish transgressions assumed a grandiose and terrible stature in the eyes of some monks. Given what has already been stated regarding the relationship of Pauline Christianity with Pharisaic Judaism, it was little wonder why cloistered and itinerant cenobites pursued Jews with such vehemence.<sup>59</sup>

That the Ruthenians inherited the angst without the historical knowledge was apparent; the nature of that inheritance and its subsequent influence upon Ruthenian theological de-

velopment was not. They were a third party. Just what did the missionaries teach them? Concerning the Jews, it appears, from the extant Ruthenian literature, that they served as a didactic tool, like actors in a play who were ushered onto the stage to play specific roles and then banished to the wings until summoned again. More will be devoted to this issue later on. For the present, one must wonder about the knowledge accompanying those who brought the Gospel to this frontier region. As the Apostle to the Slavs, Constantine-Cyril would have been well aware of Byzantium's declining fortunes and what was at stake in terms of his mission. More importantly, his willingness to innovate in and adapt to alien circumstance, given his theological education and disposition, would determine his success or failure in this venture. Historically and intellectually, he did not work alone nor was he free to do so. Being acclaimed as the principal theologian of the moment was small comfort when the honoree believed himself indebted to tradition. Among those whose works exercised a profound influence upon him and his successors were those of St. Gregory Nazianzen, of which more will be presented forthwith. The reason for this protracted foundation-laying is that, if any meaningful appreciation of the Jewish ethos in the Ruthenian imagination is to be had, a cogent consideration of the Orthodox metaphysical upbringing of its tutors is imperative.

### **Defamation of Character: The Jewish Ethos and Perceived Dangers**

In a letter to Trypho the Jew, Justin the Martyr claimed that Christians had more of a right to possess the Scriptures than the Jews since "we allowed ourselves to be persuaded by them while you (Jews) read them without grasping their true import."<sup>60</sup> In his *Ecclesiastical History*, Socrates Scholasticus could not understand why so many Christians

were still confused by Jewish observances in honoring those of their own faith since the death of Christ affected the transformation of Judaism into Christianity.<sup>61</sup> These are but two of a plethora of polemical pieces which were circulated liberally in Byzantine intellectual circles. Perhaps one of the more prominent figures who shaped the thoughts of many Orthodox theologians besides Constantine-Cyril was St. Gregory Nazianzus. A curious yet common theme of St. Gregory's which insinuated itself into those of St. John Chrysostom's was the portrayal of Arianism as a new Judaism, complete with all of the errors and the capacity to lead the unwary towards Hell and destruction.<sup>62</sup> Should these dramatic scenes fail to move the wary, St. Gregory followed up his descriptions by claiming to actually feel Christ's pain on the Cross and his anger at being rejected as the Son of God by the very people whom he was to redeem.<sup>63</sup> Quoting Paul's letter to the Romans (Rom 1:1-7), Jesus became a Jew to gain the Jews, but if the notion of the Son of God becoming the Son of Man offends them, let them be offended and also allow the Greeks to deride and the heretics to talk until their tongues ache.<sup>64</sup> Regarding the Jews, Gregory was consistently on the defensive, and where he really attenuated his angst was in his work *Christus Patiens* which could only have impressed Constantine in the most profound manner.

After the fashion of Euripides, Gregory opened his narrative, "I will relate to you the mysteries of the Passion from the mouth of the Virgin Mary herself."<sup>65</sup> From there, Mary, in the company of an unnamed disciple identified only as "the one Christ loved most," speculated upon why her son was executed.<sup>66</sup> Also, she wondered aloud about the specific discourses the Jews used to condemn him to death and what punishment lay in store for their perfidy.<sup>67</sup> The "Divine divorce" of the Jews from the "orthodox" covenant of her son was already taking shape in her imagination and, not unlike the four gospels and John in particular, she saw the Jews as

hostile *perushim* (separated, cut off).<sup>68</sup> After she expressed her sorrow and anger, Christ's spirit visited her and castigated her for her "womanish emotions," after which she became philosophical and claimed that her son's sacrifice was fated and necessary for the salvation of humankind.<sup>69</sup> Even so, charges of Jewish calumny were still a prominent feature of this narrative and, not surprisingly, the Jews stood to lose in the end. Moses, for instance, had had his chance when he was on Mount Sinai and saw Christ descending from Heaven but, since he did not recognize the Redeemer, fell short of salvation, and offended God by asking who he was, God denied him entrance into the Promised Land.<sup>70</sup>

One unmistakable investment that *Christus Patiens* made in the Ruthenian/Ukrainian theological and intellectual mien, if only indirectly, was its conception of the harrowing of Hell. Conceded, it would not have been unreasonable for Orthodox theologians, Byzantine or otherwise, to have introduced the Ruthenians to the *Acts of Pilate* and its ancillary subplot, the *Gospel of Nicodemus*, where this story is given full treatment. Be that as it may, there are some unique points which tie Nazianzen's work closely with the seventeenth-century play *Slovo o zbureniu pekla*. In the opening of the play, Lucifer and Hades are having a conversation which is an uncanny opposite parallel to that in *Christus Patiens* between Mary and the disciples. Mary's distraught or "womanish ways" are, according to Lucifer, an expression of her fear to petition the Jewish councilors in his behalf, a fear inspired, perhaps, by doubt over his divinity.<sup>71</sup> Hades expresses some reticence at this point, indicating to Lucifer that he is investing too much in his manipulation of the Jewish judges in condemning Christ. In a spirit of amicable respect, Lucifer claims that his Jewish partisans will not disappoint him and in confirmation of his statement, the first messenger returns to report that Jesus is to be led out of the city to a "loving place" for his execution.<sup>72</sup> Recall that in

*Christus Patiens*, Mary is informed by messengers about her son's fate. From this juncture, two distinct and yet similar conclusions arise. In Nazianzen's work, the narrative concludes on a note of philosophical optimism; claiming, not unlike the Gospel of John, that the Passion was not only necessary but presaged, and that humanity will derive benefits from it. As for the *Slovo*, Christ succeeds in liberating the righteous ignorant (i.e., those who lived before His coming) leaving behind, initially, Solomon, who was to be patriated upon His second visitation. Only too clearly does Lucifer, seeing Hell in all but complete ruin, make the historical parallel of the Temple's double destruction and begs Christ to take the philosopher-king with him.<sup>73</sup> After this plea, Christ takes a clement tone with Lucifer, promising him that in the end of days he will fill all of Hell with beer and that compensation for his current loss will be made.<sup>74</sup> This may very well have been the identical spirit behind John Milton's *Paradise Regained* where the demonstration of true goodness was the maintenance of balance. In both instances, returning good for evil realized universal spiritual stability.

To the seventeenth-century creator of the *Slovo*, this final act was imperative. For St. Gregory, immediate concerns left little room for charity, especially towards one's adversaries. Imbued with Nazianzen's teachings and others, Orthodox missionaries had a set demeanor to their mission. Had they been privy to these "higher affairs," the Ruthenians might have become confused, so the "dangers" confronting the faith had to be made more immediate and pedestrian.<sup>75</sup> Pragmatism, simplicity and the narrow view were needed to instill in these neophytes the fullness of Orthodox doctrines. Exegesis was for another time and, if at all, for a more mature society firmly ensconced in the Byzantine sphere. A consequence of this conservatism was that the Ruthenians were led to believe that groups and bodies outside of the Byzantine (Slavic) Orthodox purview were potential detractors who

by guile and deceit made it their terrestrial business to detour simple Christians from the path of salvation.<sup>76</sup> Jews, of course, were a threat but to cast them out completely would invoke the curse of Cain.<sup>77</sup> That aside, it was made clear to the inhabitants of the Wild Fields that it was their fundamental duty, as was true of all Orthodox Christians, to prepare for sainthood regardless of whether one actually entered monastic orders and under no circumstance was deviation from the "truth" to be tolerated.<sup>78</sup> Outward adherence was crucial but even more was required. For those who wondered why such exertions were needed when they had been taught that Christ had conquered Satan and his legions, the response was that the victory had to be won continually if the blessings of the Resurrection given against death and judgment were to be realized fully.<sup>79</sup> Perhaps the most difficult task before Constantine was to translate his own appreciation of the perils of the world to his followers. Only so much could be taught and the rest was dependent upon the individual's heightened internal sensitivity. One either possessed this demeanor or did not and he, who was enveloped by it, could not imagine someone disposed otherwise. Inspiring and cultivating this impulse along carefully orchestrated courses within individuals was a Herculean objective in its own right, but the Orthodox intelligentsia had to think in terms of investing this vision within an institution. As if that were not enough to contemplate, there was also the issue of how he could model his theological creation to serve both Byzantine purposes and the more immediate needs of the Ruthenians. Rationale had its place but fear was a more practical implement. Time and again, Orthodox priests exhorted their congregations to safeguard the Byzantine Church through eternal vigilance; an inactive faith was death, but the problem was that Byzantium's concerns were as remote as God and the vault of Heaven.<sup>80</sup> Through careful manipulation, however, the dangers confronting the Byzantine Church eventu-

ally became those besetting the Ruthenians through the unity of theology and identity.

### **Mixing the Mortar and Forming the Bricks**

Those arrayed against religious truth also had the potential for robbing the Ruthenians of their very identity, though the joining of Ruthenian self-awareness to Ruthenian Orthodoxy was a gradual development.<sup>81</sup> Religion and raw emotion served to evoke in the minds of many the image of Jews as perennial adversaries without exception and saints were always at the ready to do battle. As related in the *Life of Methodius*, when the Jews were blaspheming the Christian faith, Methodius' devotion and Constantine's eloquence brought about their defeat and shame.<sup>82</sup> Sometime before, in the *Vita Constantinii*, Constantine was drawn into a debate with a Samaritan who, to support his position, brought with him his Samaritan scriptures. The future saint, according to the account, dissected the work, discovered its errors and presented his case with such conviction that the Samaritan and his son were immediately baptized and welcomed into the Church.<sup>83</sup> In that same vein, Constantine was also credited with affecting the baptism of two hundred Jewish Khazars after a protracted forensic exhibition.<sup>84</sup>

These two examples are quite revealing in that they all but mirror experiences of St. Gregory in his disputes with Arians and, on a larger scale, illustrated a common Byzantine intellectual tactic. In each instance, there was a dispute brought about by the "erring" party who, though initially ardent, succumbed to the reason of the Orthodox defendant. A century before Constantine, Sergius the Stylite of Gousit was supposedly accosted by a Jew over what the latter claimed to be Christian errors and transgressions against God's law. In an admonitory tone, Sergius attempted to illustrate that the pillars of the Christian faith, especially the Trinity, which

seemed to disturb the Jews greatly, was derived from the writings of the Jewish prophets.<sup>85</sup> Curiously, Sergius himself began in a confident tone, but as this forensic disquisition progressed and touched upon, for example, ritual impurity derived from corpses, which came uncomfortably close to Christian reliquary, the pedagogue lost some of his philosophical reserve. Compelled by circumstance to tread upon vulnerable ground, he first assailed his opponent with a barrage of Psalms and passages from the prophetic books, all taken out of context which, from the temper of the text, proved unsatisfactory. Often his rebuttals were circular and only concerned trivial errors made by his alleged Jewish adversary rather than the issues at hand. By way of an out, Sergius then turned his attention to the prophetic presaging of Christ and was blunt in his accusation that the Jews, by rejecting the obvious "truth," have ceased to be Jews. "Jew," he contended, meant "one who confesses," but because you, Jew, have denied what your prophets saw so clearly, are now merely crucifiers and your ancient name exists only as a Divine rebuke.<sup>86</sup> From this height of sanctimonious indignation he once more became mired when making distinctions between worshiping Christ and venerating the Cross and unwittingly afforded himself no avenue of graceful retreat. After a period of convoluted wrangling, he made his own exit by making his Jewish adversary offer a weak apology for being swayed more by the judgments of his coreligionists than by God.<sup>87</sup> The Jew's eventual capitulation came as no surprise, but an unexpected dividend from this self-serving exercise was that it was quite clear that, even within the parochial confines of jousting with phantoms, uncertainties were omnipresent in certain areas of Orthodoxy. Compounding the problem, typology had served them well in confronting Gnostic dualism and seemingly edifying the position of Christ's divinity while making them dependent upon Jewish scriptures as a primary support.<sup>88</sup> Above all else, that vulnerability had to



be hidden by any means necessary.

One of the more vociferous obfuscators of this “crack in the battlements” was Jacob of Sarug (449-521), Bishop of Batna (518). For his part, he composed seven homilies against the Jews which, like Sergius’s work, was an attempt to denude Judaism of its supposed holy fantasies and edify the image of Orthodox Christianity. In his first homily, he claimed that the fundamental error of the Jews was that they recognized the Father but rejected the Logos and the Spirit.<sup>89</sup> That this was derived from the Book of John is hardly astounding, yet it must be pointed out that this was the first Gospel presented to the Ruthenians and, in comparison to the others, the Passion was accorded fuller treatment and Jewish portrayals were more prominent and decidedly negative. Furthermore, Jacob posed direct questions to the Jews about their beliefs and practices but, unlike Sergius and, later, Constantine-Cyril, his phantoms had to bear his corrective didacticism in silent submission. Granted, John Chrysostom employed the same device but, in his circumstances in Antioch, Jews were more likely to hear his charges and challenge them *in corpore* rather than in those of the Bishop of Batna’s. Subsequently, Jacob claimed that the Jews hated and slandered him because of Jesus and, in another context, the Jews afflicted him with their misguided notions about circumcision and the Sabbath.<sup>90</sup> By degrees, he excited himself into a mental state where all of Christ’s afflictions and those of the Apostles became his; his very identity became one with theirs, and the expression of this metamorphosis was most evident in his latter homilies. By the time he had composed the fourth homily, any discussion of Christianity with a Jew was deemed undignified since traffic with those who exchanged Truth for the Golden Calf was unproductive.<sup>91</sup> Eventually, he openly told the Synagogue, the imagined Jewish collective in his mind, to shut up because it had already committed murder and any attempt at justification

would add to its iniquities.<sup>92</sup>

One tangible explanation for Jacob's virulence was that the Arabs threatened Batna during his lifetime and that the possibility of being forced to convert to Islam by fanatics was a pressing fear. If, to his mind, such a fate had befallen him, it would have been more than simply incurring God's wrath and rejection, he would have lost his very identity.<sup>93</sup> Also, Jews were frequently associated with Arabs and Turks as those who would go to any lengths to enfeeble Orthodox Christianity though, perhaps, even the beleaguered Bishop of Batna conceded privately that Jews were not known for compelling people to accept their faith.

Discerning personal apprehensions or degree of Judeophobia is not altogether impossible but this is merely part of a larger whole in terms of determining how this impulse informed Constantine and his successors, shaped their perceptions, and were translated into Ruthenian Slavic. If one example could suffice to describe the ethos of Constantine-Cyril's mission and its lasting imprint upon the Ruthenian psyche, it would have to be the works of John Chrysostom (349-421). It was during his tenure in Antioch where he formulated the foundations of his theological vision and anti-Jewish polemics. Antioch was a cosmopolitan and Greek city where many nations resided and participated in its commercial and intellectual life. For Chrysostom, this was a point of pride which certainly God would have afforded him, but it was amidst this diversity that he also came to realize his obligation to protect what he believed to be the "fragile ark of the Eastern Church."<sup>94</sup> Initially, the Arians challenged Orthodox integrity and they called upon him specifically, owing to his forensic and oratory acumen, to engage them in open debate. To this, he responded by first trivializing their cause and then, when they all but demanded that he finally accede, he responded that the Arian debate (which never took place) would have to be delayed in light of a new and more immediate threat to

**Orthodoxy, Judaizing Christians.<sup>95</sup>**

This concern was not altogether a neurotic fantasy. What has to be understood is that in his particular experiences in Antioch, Jews and Jewish Christians lived within proximity. Furthermore, Jewish cultural and intellectual influences emanating from Persia and Palestine were profound, all but excluding any metaphysical or theological "competition."<sup>96</sup> Also in the fourth century, Christian ritual was fairly close to Jewish practice, and it was not uncommon for some individuals to attend the synagogue on Friday evening and the church on Sunday morning without any crisis of conscience. In later centuries, the distinctions would become more visible, yet this very problem which Chrysostom addressed in his time actually evinced the core problem of the Byzantine Church in terms of every article of faith which it held dear and certainly was not far from Constantine's thoughts. An early didactic tale related an incident in a village where it was discovered that the crucifix in the local church had been violated. Naturally, the priest and concerned officials made immediate inquiries and discovered, eventually, that the guilty man was none other than a chess-playing Jew. Within the story, the "chess-playing" qualifier was given without further elaboration but, then again, perhaps the audience to whom it was directed did not need it. First of all, chess was a Persian import just like many of the Jews of Antioch. Furthermore, the game itself was one of logic, anticipation and speculation, skills which the Orthodox Church favored insofar as they were enlisted in its service but feared when they manifested themselves outside of its sphere of influence. Judaism's very essence rested upon forensics. If Torah had been complete, there would have been no need for Talmud, and even when that canon was sealed at the end of the sixth century, rabbis and learned Jewish laymen still engaged in debate, examination and re-examination of all but a small core of issues. Generally, Jews tended to keep their own

company, but if interested scholars from without wished to study or engage in intellectual intercourse, they were seldom turned away.<sup>97</sup> With intellectual influences as pervasive as their commercial activities, monkish anxieties became more keenly attenuated as time went on and invariably influenced Constantine in his mission to the Slavs.

As for Chrysostom, his circumstances were, in historical retrospect, unique. In his homilies directed towards the Jews, his true target was the hybrid Jewish Christian who was not content to keep his doctrines to himself but also engaged in proselytizing and thus imperiling the integrity of the Orthodox Church. This distinction must be realized because John failed to do so himself, perhaps deliberately because his tactic for defeating his competitors was to render their theological source as unpalatable as possible. In terms of his disposition, Chrysostom admitted that his hatred of the Jews stemmed from their possession of the original scriptures and that his ignorance of Hebrew gave him a sense of helplessness.<sup>98</sup> In light of this, it was little wonder why he made considerable investments in homiletic composition on the New Testament and especially on the Gospel of John. What set this Gospel apart from the Synoptic ones is that its philosophy and overall style was most complex, and though depictions of Jewish attitudes towards Christ in Matthew, Mark and Luke were derogatory, they were presented with a keener virulence in the Johannine.<sup>99</sup> In his ninth homily, for instance, John opined that Jewish ignorance of Christ and their repudiation of his office of *Tsaddik ha-Dor* (Messiah) did not spring from mere error but from conscious wickedness.<sup>100</sup> How else could such blindness be justified? Continuing on, though Christ had come for the lost sheep of Israel, their perfidy had placed them on a par with the Greeks, since both had sinned and had fallen short of the glory of God. Capitalizing on this point, Chrysostom went on to claim in his thirty-third homily that Christ claimed

that the Jews were superior in knowledge to the Samaritans. Even so, the latter accepted Christ and, therefore, demonstrated a greater superiority, particularly since his reception was initiated by the simple questioning of a woman.<sup>101</sup> This episode is quite telling. Recall that Constantine's discourse with the Samaritan brought about his conversion, the miracle of which was that he and his son belonged to a "caste" of Jews whom even Christ, in the Book of Matthew, originally shunned owing to their ritual impurity. If this group, doubly condemned initially by Christ and Jews, could be redeemed, then this was plain testimony, in both Chrysostom's and later Constantine's mind, to Christ's universal salvation. Jubilation over this issue, however, yielded to offense when "Samaritan" was rendered a derisive epithet.

To Chrysostom's mind, nothing was worse than envy and malice, the two impulses which compelled the Jews to become Christ-slayers.<sup>102</sup> Before leading him to the cross, however, the Jews insulted him by calling him a Samaritan and accusing him of possessing a devil. To these charges, Chrysostom assumed an editorial posture and proceeded to charge the Jews with heresy and asserted that, though personal insults could be borne with mildness, those levied against God were intolerable.<sup>103</sup> Finally, he addressed Christ's assertion that those who had seen him had seen the Father (the One who sent me). Noting the readiness of Jewish leaders to stone him, John, in the posture of the all-knowing teacher to obdurate students, explained that it was the mind and not the body to which Christ referred.<sup>104</sup> Other Christian sources made light of this behavior on the part of the Jews regarding the martyrdom of Sts. Stephen and James.<sup>105</sup>

Jewish angst, real and manufactured, was exploited in many venues, but the debt owed to Jewish theological antecedents was so great that even Constantine had to acknowledge it. Like an embedded thorn, Byzantine theologians knew that without the Jewish prophets, Christian typology would have

been a futile exercise, and yet there were lacunae in the Byzantine Christian canon which could not be shored up in light of Jewish doctrine. Operating under the shadow of this realization, when Jews did convert to Christianity, the haste in "sealing off" doctrinal lacunae all but eclipsed the more profound consequence of compelling the new Christian to divest himself of his Jewish past.<sup>106</sup>

With the thoroughness of canon lawyers, Byzantine clerics tried to imagine all instances and varieties of apostasy in crafting baptismal confessions to a degree which would have made Chrysostom proud, if not a little jealous.

...in one word, I renounce absolutely everything Jewish, every law, rite, and custom, and above all I renounce the Antichrist, whom all the Jews await in the figure and form of Christ; and I join myself to the true Christ. ...and if afterwards I should wish to return to Jewish superstition or be found eating with Jews, ... then let the trembling of Cain and the leprosy of Gehazi cleave to me.<sup>107</sup>

Though an oath of short duration, its message was clear. While cursory attention was paid to saving the soul of the former Jew, much more stock was invested in casting this theological "defection" as verification of Christian legitimacy. A fair number of these testaments enumerate myriad Jewish practices and institutions which bore painful proximity to those within the confines of the Orthodox Church and, therefore, were renounced early on in the ceremony. Consider the profession of faith attached to the Clementine Recognitions:

It is my desire today to come from the Hebrews to the Christian faith. ...I renounce the whole worship of the Hebrews, their aspersions, purifications, expiations, fasts, particular foods and drinks ... And I absolutely renounce every custom and institution of the Jewish laws.<sup>108</sup>

What really set this confession apart from the one recited in

the Church of Constantinople is that the severance from and condemnation of Jewish life and culture extended beyond the neophytes' own experience.

Moreover, I place under anathema the heresies among the Jews and the heretics themselves. I anathematize the Sadducees, who are called just, who blaspheme the Holy Spirit, who attack the resurrection of the dead and deny the existence of angels. ... I anathematize the Nazarenes, the stubborn ones, who deny that the law of sacrifices was given by Moses and never offer sacrifices themselves. ... I anathematize the Osseans, the blindest of all men, who use other scriptures than the Law and reject most of the prophets... I also condemn the feast of Mordechai and all of those who ascribe to 'Deuteroes,' since there can only be one series of Divine Laws and not two. ...<sup>109</sup>

One would have to approach a knowledge of Judaism commensurate with that of the Chief Rabbis of Israel, who are also condemned, but in the second section, in order to understand fully even a modest portion of this confessional anathema. Whoever the compositors of this work were, they knew their business well. Given the depth of treatment and historical parallel, it would not be surprising if Jewish converts were enlisted in its creation, not to mention the object of such declarations. It would not have escaped the rationale of some Orthodox clergy that Jewish converts were bringing about the dilapidation of Judaism akin to the fate of the Temple of Solomon. Even so, comfort derived from the entertainment of diminishing calculus was probably tepid at best. Consider again these two samples. Granted, they are both compendia of larger compositions, yet each indicates an urgency bordering upon manic adamancy to verify Christianity. What would have inspired the hurry? Though there were no definite dates given for either of these professions, they evince the language of many Byzantine theologians and scholars from the ninth century until the dissolution of Empire in 1453. More than a few would have associated the advancing Muslims with

the Apocalypse, or at least its antecedent, and would have spurred on some to hasten baptisms and other duties associated with their offices.

If it appeared that some were tending towards flight, others were certainly willing to stand and even embrace the doctrinal sinews binding Christianity to Judaism. In a letter from Jacob of Edessa (633-708) to John the Stylite, the latter expressed to the former what he considered to be "grave issues of conscience" in terms of orthodox action. Plaguing him to distraction were two issues: the giving of communion to menstruating women and those who had recently given birth and what to do with tables upon which pagans had feasted. As to the first, Jacob claimed that care had to be taken as to the woman's purity, either through ritual bathing or a complete cessation of the blood flow, since it was this consequence which would dishonor the holy mysteries.<sup>110</sup> To anyone acquainted with the *Shulkan Aruk* (Table of Laws) or earlier Jewish works of *Halachah* (ritual law), ritual impurity was a grave concern accorded voluminous commentary. Leviticus and Deuteronomy notwithstanding, Byzantine Christian scholars would have been aware of Jewish purity concepts and would have adopted them to suit their particular needs if for any other reason than that they appeared to carry divine sanction.<sup>111</sup>

Pagan feasting tables to be consecrated for Christian use after the participants have departed was another issue of Jewish origin. Issuing a response in keeping with the strictures of Mosaic law, Jacob informed John that in order to avoid using such furniture for holy purposes and thus profaning the offices, the table was to be cleaned and then buried in the ground.<sup>112</sup> Though three centuries separated Jacob from Chrysostom and two from Jacob to Constantine, some doctrinal difficulties persisted and thus became part of the intellectual inheritance of successive generations of Greeks and Ruthenians.



**Constantine:  
Deliverer of the Slavs or a Breaker of New Ground?**

Though he forbore a monk's habit until the point of death, Constantine-Cyril possessed a Byzantine monastic demeanor with all of its trappings as well as the intellectual traditions of his forebearers. As for Nazianzen, Constantine wanted more than to simply "walk in the shoes of the fisherman"; he wanted to make Christ's experiences his own. Years of austere contemplation had fused Constantine's reality with that of Christ's so that the latter's detractors became Constantine's personal foes, and those responsible for the Passion became the future St. Cyril's potential murders and, like St. Gregory before him, he actually felt the pain of crucifixion.<sup>113</sup> The trials and tribulations which this Byzantine prelate and diplomat eventually assumed as his own were myriad, yet none of them compared in gravity to the mission which he would eventually be asked to undertake.<sup>114</sup>

When Emperor Michael III (842-867) implored his best theologian to honor the request of Prince Ratislav of Bohemia, the latter all but refused. Old age and fatigue aside, if he had to provide these potential converts with an alphabet suitable to an alien linguistic medium in the hope of conveying Orthodox Christianity, problems, he foresaw, would abound in a number of quarters.<sup>115</sup> Whether he actually had to manufacture a glagolitic writing system or utilize and expand upon an extant albeit rudimentary one is a forensic issue which, though important, still does not account for Constantine's fear of "writing on water and assuming for himself the name of a heretic."<sup>116</sup> This statement requires careful examination.

The common translation of the Greek idiom "to write on water" is "to do something useless," but Constantine made it clear that his meaning was more grave. Whether Ratislav

realized it or not, what was needed was a specific Slavic catechism and Constantine was unsure of how to proceed. His previous mission to the Khazars (860-61 and then episodically under his successors until 885) may not have been as successful as he would have liked, but at least he had been on familiar ground. One boon granted him was that under Byzantine Emperor Heraclius (610-641) Greek became Khazaria's official language of administration. In the following century, the political bonds between Khazaria and Byzantium, regardless of strain, were strengthened though the marriage, in 732, of Emperor Leo's son Constantine to the daughter of the Khazar Kagan who, after baptism, was named Irena.<sup>117</sup> It was also during the first half of that century that Christianity flourished in the Kaganate and throughout the southern portions of Eastern Europe. As to whether the civil unrest later on inspired the Jews to persecute Khazari Christians on whose behalf Constantine assumed the *de facto* role as *fidei defensor* cannot be determined with any degree of exactitude.<sup>118</sup> Whatever the reasons, Emperor Joseph of Khazaria supposedly provided Constantine and the Church with considerable material for anti-Jewish propaganda on this score.<sup>119</sup> Diplomatic and theological brusqueness can alter fundamental elements of a relationship and yet Khazaria's multinational population had intellectual affinities towards Byzantium that could not be eradicated completely and still afforded communion on a number of levels. With the Slavs, however, Constantine did not have this advantage.

A Slavic-specific catechism with a Byzantine orientation meant that the teacher had to become a student of his students. Initially, he would have recourse to his own knowledge and those of Byzantine Orthodox tradition but, inevitably, there would come the occasion where the Byzantine idiom, and more than simply its linguistic component, could not be translated to his would-be converts *in toto*. He would have to innovate, and that might bring to light another prob-

lem.<sup>120</sup> What would he do if, in adapting Orthodoxy to quotidian Ruthenian practicalities, he perceived “imperfections” or potential “errors” in the Byzantine Canon? Could he trust himself to embark upon the “right” course of action? The danger was real and immediate. Byzantine Orthodoxy had cultural and theological components which either had no counterparts in the Ruthenian ethos or could only be translated to Ruthenian equivalents by complicated and imperfect means. Filling the lacunae coming into his purview would hardly have compelled him to read the *Synodikon* before a congregation on the first Sunday of Lent, yet to act with too much liberty would have run counter to all in which he believed.<sup>121</sup> It had been a longstanding precept of the Orthodox tradition that will and intellect were not one’s own but Christ’s temporal donation.<sup>122</sup> In possession of such a donation, it was incumbent upon those so selected to realize that the New Testament was the court of last resort where decisions were made with impeccable finality.<sup>123</sup> At no time was it ever a forum for perpetual forensics. Constantine knew this only too well, and two centuries later, after a period of relative intellectual liberalism, John Italos discovered just how entrenched Byzantine conservatism remained when he attempted to strengthen Orthodoxy through philosophical inquiry. As Italos was reminded and Constantine kept in the back of his mind, if one was not one of the original Apostles, no further “truths” of faith could be presented and no errors discovered.<sup>124</sup> By means of this rigidity the Church had preserved its independence from the political ministrations of Constantinople and, through opposing all attempts at doctrinal innovation and compromise, its theological hegemony and spiritual integrity.<sup>125</sup> Such was the disposition of the fortress denizens.

Committing heresy, regardless of intent, was Constantine’s overarching fear in Slavic “waters” where there were no guideposts save those of his construction.<sup>126</sup> Even his distant

mentor, St. Gregory, recognized this peril when he advised his successors to train their arguments in matters where to hit the mark would not be useless and missing it would not be dangerous, but even that was an admonition of limited capital.<sup>127</sup> Later Slavic texts received direct translations of this phobia. One of these, *Vo slavu boga*, was a late eighteenth-century Ruthenian Slavic primer derived from the works of St. Gregory Nazianzen. In addition to myriad word lists in parallel columns of Latin, Greek and Ruthenian Slavic, there was a section in the latter language on good and bad reading of sacred texts.<sup>128</sup> Good reading, it was declared, was pleasing to God whereas bad was accounted a sin. Coupled with this was a didactic discourse on the sin of idleness and, as reinforcement, were capped with a woodcut depicting the good student on the right receiving praise for his efforts while another, on the left, was being chastised with batogi (rods) for committing the sin under consideration. The two levels of meaning are unmistakable. Fundamentally, the student was exhorted to exercise intellectual diligence and realize the importance of reading God's laws correctly and the penalty for non-performance. On a more philosophical plane, the scholar responsible for the imperfect transmission of Scripture which would inspire "bad reading" and lead to heresy could expect a punishment far more severe than any imaginable on this side of the grave. Bearing this in mind and imbued with the monastic vision that the world was populated by adversaries real and imagined, Orthodox Christianity plainly bore a defensive if not militant demeanor during Constantine's time and in succeeding centuries.<sup>129</sup>

### **Byzantium's Perpetual Inheritance**

Clement of Alexandria, whose works had inspired St. Gregory, maintained that fear was not necessarily a negative impulse but one which, with the proper cultivation, could

lead the faithful to repentance, hope and love.<sup>130</sup> Judging from the Slavic literature of succeeding generations from Constantine's mission, this lesson had not been lost on the Apostle to the Slavs, though it provided some unique and unforeseen dividends. The immediate works were ecclesiastical and didactic in origin, if not outright Slavic translations of earlier Greek texts, and though Jewish images were seldom flattering, they were not altogether ominous. To clarify, aside from some limited engagements, Judeophobia in the Slavic imagination originated as a distant, hazy and dispassionate phenomenon which one embraced within the confines of Church education but not one generally met on the streets. It was only with later political developments that Judeophobia and its attendant mythology assumed a tangibility which was not "new" but rather cyclical in nature.

That the incident of first contact between Slavs and Jews within the Ruthenian medium occurred in ecclesiastical literature should come as no surprise. What is intriguing, however, is to decipher what in particular Constantine-Cyril and Methodius actually provided their neophytes. In the *Vita Methodii*, Methodius, shortly after his brother's death, translated all of the books of the Bible, save Maccabees, into Slavic.<sup>131</sup> In addition, other sources contend that he, with the help of two translators, saw the necessity and practicality in rendering the *Nomocanon* and the didactic *Books of the Fathers* into the Slavic vernacular. Providing the Ruthenians with a substantial body of literature in order to sustain the Orthodox faith in their midst would certainly have been a vital pursuit, yet it is still remarkable that several centuries elapsed before the Ruthenians and their fellow Slavs had access to all books of the Bible.<sup>132</sup> Myriad logistical and technological reasons could be offered for this plodding dissemination, but one incident from the mid-sixteenth century may be more revealing than those derived from other quarters. In 1564, two printers in the Russian lands were given sanc-

tion from the highest ecclesiastical and civil authorities to produce the Acts of the Apostles and the Pauline epistles in the vernacular Slavic. What transpired in the interim was not made clear, but supposedly, when these works were disseminated, the two were charged by their communal elders and the community at large with committing heresy. Heresy was a sin of the Jews. More than a simple verbal rebuke, the situation became dangerous and no amount of official protection could spare their lives if they remained. Having no other option, they had to flee.<sup>133</sup> Fear combined with imagined divine retribution had not only been learned but had become ingrained in the minds of many Orthodox Slavs.

For the majority, the Church was the source of primary, if not total in some areas, education and its psychological impact was profound. A prayer against the Devil from the second half of the thirteenth century illustrated the depth of influence with which the Byzantine seed propagated *ad infinitum*.<sup>134</sup> The penitent begged Jesus to "make my sins rot away, sink into a pool and drown," a formula which had some interesting parallels beyond religion.<sup>135</sup> Fear, however, was not mitigated by this exhortation alone. Jesus may have been the primary party of concern but, in order to ensure one's security from the unimaginable and terrible torments which awaited those who strayed from the *oikonomia*, a further appeal was made to all twelve Apostles and the entire Heavenly Host.<sup>136</sup> Tied inextricably to this state of imagined spiritual poverty was that the penitent was a *raba* (slave) to the salvatory *Kyrie* (Lord) which again revealed more than it evinced superficially.<sup>137</sup> First of all, the New Testament koine rendered *Kyrie* as "the Lord of Hosts" which was a reference to Christ and would have been understood throughout the Christian world even though, originally, it referred to a slave owner.<sup>138</sup> Secondly, there was an apparent contradiction in terms of the relationship between the simple Christian and Christ. Countless sermons had pressed the point that

Christianity was synonymous with civilization and liberation from darkness.<sup>139</sup> How then did this liberation accord with broadly-conceived obligations of stewardship? Recall that the Trinity was offered to the Slavs originally as a unity of ecclesiastical and political policy. Cenobitic submission to the Godhead would have been, for Constantine and those sharing his disposition, an automatic impulse which would have found expression in the Slavic translation. For example, in a number of prayers to the Holy Trinity, the petitioner not only asked Christ to lead him “away from all evil affairs” but also to “guard him against all seductive freedom (bse prel’sti svobodi) through the strength and power of your (Christ’s) will.”<sup>140</sup> Speculative inquiry cut across secular and sacred spheres, and owing to its potential for inspiring alterations in thought and action, it was the province of a learned and trusted few who were compelled to enter into forensic circumstance with much reticence.

Closely associated with limited liberation were the issues of literacy and the paucity of available literature which invariably touched upon the Jews. Beyond contest, the publication in 1581 of the Ostroh Bible under the auspices of Constantine, Duke of Ostroh was a boon to the Slavs’ theological intelligence yet, in terms of religious posture, the old habits stood firm. For approximately four or five centuries, from the ninth until the end of the fourteenth, Orthodox Slavs were afforded little more than a compendium of the Acts of the Apostles, the four Gospels, especially the enigmatic Book of John, and the Davidic Psalms. Ignorant of the peculiar operation of Pharisaic forensics and the specific circumstances which inspired the Gospels, the evocation of any positive, let alone neutral, portrayals of Jews would have been impossible. Furthermore, the Psalters reinforced popular notions both visually and textually. For instance, it was not uncommon in woodcuts depicting the crucifixion to show ugly Jews at the foot of the Cross engaged in some

worldly and often sacrilegious activity.<sup>141</sup> These representations, obviously, had to be read on a number of levels, the fundamental one playing upon the simple human psychological impulse of being attracted to beauty and repelled by ugliness or, in another fashion, fearing most what one understands least. Associating ugliness (i.e. bad reading) with anti-Christian motives and a device of the Devil would have been understood readily by the average Slavic devotee. On a more profound level, these depictions evinced a deeper struggle with heresy and the clerical use of sagaciously-implemented fear to keep the “innocent Slavs” free of it.

If Ruthenian Slavic spiritual purity was indeed a priority of the Byzantine clergy, it had a number of challengers to discredit and dispatch with all expedition. The Paulicians, a heretical Christian group proximate to Constantinople, were charged by their ecclesiastical detractors with constituting a “new Jewry” because they rejected many Christian beliefs which Jews and Muslims had contested and were especially hostile towards religious iconography and other forms of imagery.<sup>142</sup> Among the beliefs they espoused in *The Keys of Truth* were that the mother of Christ was not a virgin, Christ was not God, Orthodox baptism was a useless gesture, and that only they were true Christians.<sup>143</sup> Arians, Sebellians and Gnostics were also seen as contentious varieties of the same genus along with Turkish and Bulgar Muslims, and it did not stop there. With the 1054 schism between Byzantium and Rome, Orthodox opinion was that this consequence had been brought about because the Romans had embraced Jewish errors.<sup>144</sup> In terms of castigating fellow and seemingly wayward Christians into returning to the “proper” fold, the Jews were a necessary convenience. For the lower clergy and simple believers, they were the ideal instrument to inspire fear and, therefore, compliance to Orthodox beliefs and for the upper, the illustration of a “foolish example” which had the potential for bruising intellectual egos and bringing



about the same end. What these cunning and opportunistic detractors could not have foreseen, however, was the eventual metamorphosis of these Judeocentric anti-heretical attacks as they became embedded in the Ruthenian Slavic mind and applied by the same to more Slavocentric endeavors.

Though the Gospels and Orthodoxy's adamant stance on the Monophysite issue made it clear that Christ died of his own free will, the Jews were still held culpable owing to their malice and, therefore, would be accorded little respite in any sphere of life.<sup>145</sup> As the centuries progressed, the Slavic students became teachers and progenitors of this and other lessons of the Orthodox legacy and adapted their precepts to suit their peculiar circumstances. Despairing over their inability to cast aside the title "enemies of Christ," at least the Jews could take comfort in the knowledge that, as their imagined ethos transcended the sacred into secular realms, they had company. In the maelstrom surrounding the 1596 Union of Brest, there was no documentation of Jewish participation in any respect and yet Prince Kostiantyn Ostroz'kyi likened those who supported Papal supremacy to those Jews who betrayed Christ.<sup>146</sup> In the Ruthenian imagination, Poles and Jews came to be seen as one and the same since both were considered enemies of Orthodoxy, and not simply over the issue of establishing a Uniate clergy. How many instances had there been when Jewish tax farmers in Polish employ had literally held the keys to the local church and barred the faithful from holy worship, usually on a holiday?<sup>147</sup> This denial of performing God's service became a popular anathema which found expression in a variety of media. For instance, the Ruthenian *dumy* decried the spiritual pain of Cossacks held in Muslim captivity who were denied, and never again would partake of, Orthodox Christian worship, the only difference being that this latter instance was more likely to accord with historical reality than active Jewish malfeasance.<sup>148</sup> What did it matter? Oppression of Orthodox

Christianity was seen, particularly among the lower clergy and their congregations, as a universal condition and their oppressors monolithic. "Jew" was a convenient label, and as popular imagination took over from the ecclesiastical one, it provided the *adversus Judeos* genre with some unusual addenda.

Jews also served a curious purpose in the transformation of Ruthenians into Ukrainians and subsequent establishment of distinctions between them and other Slavs. Mykola Kostomarov (1817-1885) saw them as a vital link in establishing the theological purity of the Ruthenians/Ukrainians as opposed to both the Poles and Muscovy. From his perspective, the Jews were not necessarily evil but they had erred in electing David their king and, subsequently, forgetting their obligations to God. Furthermore, when the Jews, through the line of Shem, rejected Christ, God's favor shifted to Japheth from whose younger brother the Slavic tribe was descended.<sup>149</sup> Had they been content to bask in this Divine glory and keep the Godhead within view, Eden would have been reborn but, like a Biblical epic, misfeasance corrupted this auspicious lineage and stole away God's favor. The Poles became victims of their own vanity and followed the inferior doctrines of Rome while Muscovy's obedience to the Tatar Khan eclipsed that due to God. Like the Jews before them, they turned to worshiping Gog and Magog.<sup>150</sup> The Ukrainians alone had not deviated from their simple faith and that is what saved them.

How the Jews eventually confirmed this simple purity was a curious case. Quite simply, they were little more than means to an end. Kostomarov depicted them as benign demons who, on their own account, did not seek to subvert Christianity but became active in that endeavor when erring Christians employed misunderstood Jewish doctrines in parochial attempts to stamp out the true faith lend credence to their particular heretical positions. To clarify, in response to

the corruption of their Slavic brothers, the Ukrainians formed the Cossack Host, a true Christian brotherhood in defense of Orthodoxy amongst whom neither thievery nor fornication existed.<sup>151</sup> Falling short of declaring them a community of saints outright, Kostomarov asserted, nevertheless, that even heresy and idolatry were unknown to them. Such purity accorded its possessors an attractive and enviable freedom which the surrounding landholders feared so much that they sold their slaves to the Jews in order to prevent them from joining the Host.<sup>152</sup>

The allegory was plain and had the unusual feature of straddling both sacred and secular realms. Given the nationalistic impulses coursing through Ukraine in the nineteenth century, Jews were seen as obstructive competition owing to their own aspirations for civic equity in the Russian Empire which, some surmised, siphoned off possible Imperial sympathies towards recognizing Ukrainian particularism. On another plane, Jews represented the darker or erring impulse invested in some Ukrainians who, though deluding themselves into thinking that they advocated the welfare of the Slavic (Ukrainian) community, actually worked for its impairment. As to whether Ukrainians, from the intelligentsia to the artisans, were conscious of this disposition is a consideration which would have to be examined on an individual basis. Even so, the Jewish ethos as it arose from Byzantine missionary instruction and underwent a series of metamorphoses, provided the Slavs, and the Ruthenians/Ukrainians in particular, with an intellectual undercurrent which pulsed through their minds in a fairly continuous flow.

### Conclusion

What if all of their labors and sacrifices had been for naught? Would eclipse from the world and historical memory be the ultimate reward of Byzantium and the Orthodox Church?

Oh, what one would give to have been privy to the innermost thoughts of the Greeks at Ferrara-Florence, to possess an insight into their angst and conception of their circumstance. Though an impeccably keen intelligence of this may be lost to us, there is sufficient information to surmise that they and their colleagues, the higher Orthodox clergy, believed that their mission to establish the true Christian Church was incomplete, though not in abeyance or abandoned. Incomplete in that the Empire would fall before its completion, yet there was the hope that the Byzantine “colonies” schooled in Orthodox theology, culture and philosophy would take it upon themselves to finish the task. Some comfort was taken in this realization, but in small measure. Still in discord was the issue of communion and conflict between Jewish theology and the need for Christian Orthodox distinctiveness which was translated to the Ruthenian Slavs as well as other groups subject to Orthodox ministrations.

First of all, for the higher Orthodox Christian clergy and intelligentsia, the dilemma of establishing a perfect or “original” Christian religion steeped in Jewish theology and yet compelled by design to reject Jewish institutions was an internal one. Had it remained ‘in-house’ it could have been contained, but as Christian communities spread and developed their own versions and visions of divine ‘gospel’ with varying measures of Judaism and, later, Islamic precepts, Byzantine Orthodoxy imagined itself being assailed from all quarters. The fortress was a psychological construct with several offices. Containment of internal heterodoxy would certainly have been an immediate service, but such an engine also provided the Church with an external show of strength in the face of adversaries potential and actual, and in this capacity, the image was not altogether a chimera. Recall, for instance, that the Paulician capital of Terphike fell to Byzantine forces in 872. Not only intellectually but also in terms of tangible politics, the fortress did stand firm on numerous occasions,

but this did little to sustain Orthodox self-confidence. The Jewish dimension of its theological corpus remained in need of some form of accommodation whereby the Christian Church could be – and possess the sense of – a freestanding entity and still have a firm foundation. Marcion's attempt to formulate a Christianity solely upon the New Testament was tantamount to building a house without a foundation and it was repudiated. Was there any solution at hand or at least a reprieve from the calculus of presumed failure?

By way of an answer, consider the second part of the Jewish dilemma in terms of the Orthodox Christian translation to the Ruthenians. Fortresses, like castles, are defensive engines of war, yet Byzantine Christians used theirs proactively. By extending the battlements into the Slavic lands, new converts were enlisted and imbued with the same spirit of combat readiness which had consumed their teachers. That aside, certain intellectual developments came about which, though not perceptible by most at the time, offered something of a solution to the Jewish-Orthodox Christian identity debacle.

Prior to his departure, Constantine-Cyril made it clear to Emperor Michael III that he feared that his mission would be tantamount to writing upon water. Unlike the Khazars, the Slavs were illiterate in Greek and he, Constantine, was ill-schooled in Ruthenian. Regardless of that interview, what did come about was the use of Jews as didactic tools for Orthodox Christian instruction. True, the majority of their representations on parchment and in woodcuts were unflattering, and in some instances they were satanized, but to stop at this juncture is to miss a fine point. By using the Jews in this way, Orthodox missionaries and teachers were trying to give their converts and congregations a sense of identity by holding up the Jews as representatives of "others," those outside of the Christian community. Not unlike the origins of kashrut where the first Jews, who came from a number of tribes, were compelled by their new faith to maintain purity

by abstaining from eating with their unconverted kin and tribal members, thereby emphasizing their distinctiveness as a group, so too were these “newly-minted” Christians inspired to think of themselves as a unique people. Was the original intent supposed to be anti-Jewish? Certainly this sentiment cannot be discounted but, from a theological and intellectual perspective, Jewish evocations provided a contrast that emphasized Christian distinctiveness and accorded a Christian identity.

As time went on, Jewish otherness was enlisted in secular causes, but another consequence arising from the meeting of Byzantine and Ruthenian was the further distinction between theology and religion. To be plain, in the minds of the most astute Orthodox theologians, the marriage of Jewish theology to Christian was insoluble. So be it. Religion, however, was another venue since it dealt with externals. Rituals, the order of service, iconography, and a host of other offices served Byzantine ends in a number of areas. The most prominent achievement was that the Ruthenians and their successors were “claimed” for Christ within the Orthodox sphere. Conceded, variants of practices abounded but at least Orthodoxy could declare a legitimate triumph. Following upon this *fait accompli* was Orthodoxy’s bid for immortality. It may not have been a conscious aim, but with the fall of Byzantium and the rise of the Ottoman Empire, that which was Byzantine Greek theology, culture and intellectual lore still had a life outside of its former homeland.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Among the many issues preying upon their collective conscience would have been the holy charge in the *Septuagint* (hereafter cited LXX) Exodus 23:22-32, where God informed Moses and Jews (and through inheritance, Orthodox Christians) that “Ye shall be to me a peculiar people and should you find yourselves dwelling among (lesser) peoples, ye shall not

do according to their works. ... Do not make a treaty with these (lesser) nations since they may make you sin towards me." Though the context in which this was given was to prevent the Jews from returning to idolatry, the Byzantine mind would have made the ready connection to present circumstance.

<sup>2</sup> Wayne Meeks, "Breaking Away: Three New Testament Pictures of Christianity's Separation from the Jewish Communities," in *Essential Papers on Judaism and Christianity in Conflict: From Late Antiquity to the Reformation*, ed. Jeremy Cohen (New York: New York University Press, 1991), 102.

<sup>3</sup> Citing Sirach 28:18, Chrysostom claims that restraint of language is essential since many have fallen by the sword, many more have been brought low by the word. John Chrysostom, *Le Catechesi Battesimali* ed. Luciano Zappella (Milano: Paoline, 1998), 159.

<sup>4</sup> Marcel Simon, "Christian anti-Semitism," in *Essential Papers on Judaism and Christianity in Conflict: From Late Antiquity to the Reformation*, 137.

<sup>5</sup> St. John Chrysostom, *Discourses Against Judaizing Christians*, Discourse IV, trans. Paul Harkins (Washington D.C.: Catholic University of America, 1979), 171.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 84, 88-9.

<sup>7</sup> Chrysostom, *Le Catechesi Battesimali*, 16.

<sup>8</sup> John Thomas and Angela Hero, eds., *Byzantine Monastic Foundation Documents*, vol. 1, *Dumbarton Oaks Studies XXXV*, (Washington D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks, 2000), 28, 35.

<sup>9</sup> Robert S. MacLennan, *Early Christian Texts on Jews and Judaism*, (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1990), 23.

<sup>10</sup> Clemens Thoma, *A Christian Theology of Judaism*, trans. Helga Croner (New York: Paulist Press, 1980), 41. Thoma contends that religious unity never referred exclusively to a unity in doctrine but rather to a fundamental attitude towards worship. Supporting this, Meletius Solovii, *The Byzantine Divine Liturgy: History and Commentary*, trans. Demetrius Wysochansky (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University Press of America, 1970) points out that there was no centralizing authority showing concern about liturgical uniformity. See Solovii, 53.

<sup>11</sup> *Histoire Anonyme de la Première Croisade*, trans. Louis Brehier, in Latin and French (Paris: Honore Champion, 1924), 103.

<sup>12</sup> "I know the wickedness of men. They will assume a different yoke from the one I placed upon them but will sow worthless seed." From the J-Text reproduced in extensio in James Charlesworth, ed., *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha: Apocalyptic Literature and Testaments*, vol. 1 (New York: Doubleday, 1983).

<sup>13</sup> George Florovsky, *The Byzantine Fathers of the Fifth Century*, vol. 8, *The Collected Works of George Florovsky* (Belmont: Notable and Academic Books, 1987), 18.

<sup>14</sup> Solovii, *The Byzantine Divine Liturgy*, 19. The Divine Liturgy was instituted by Christ himself as is testified in the Pauline epistles and the Gospels.

<sup>15</sup> Sozoman, *Ecclesiastical History: A History of the Church from 323-425*, translated in extensio from the Greek, Chester D. Hartranft in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, vol. 2, 2nd ed. (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1995), 297. Sozoman equated Jews with heretics.

<sup>16</sup> Wayne A. Meeks, "Breaking Away: Three New Testament Pictures of Christianity's Separation from the Jewish Communities," in *Essential Papers on Judaism and Christianity in Conflict: From Late Antiquity to the Reformation*, 101. The author asserts that the imbroglio over the legitimacy of location for the true "church of God" was a consequence of internal dynamics, but this does not resolve the issue completely. From the Orthodox perspective, the true church had to be brought back into existence; Constantinople was the only see capable of realizing the task, and if religion (an emotional product) co-opted theology (a rational product) in the pursuit of this operative fiction, so much for circumstance.

<sup>17</sup> Socrates Scholasticus, *Ecclesiastical History*, ed. Rev. A.C. Zenos, in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers* vol. 2, second series, eds. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1995), 42.

<sup>18</sup> Thomas and Hero, *Byzantine Monastic Foundation Documents*, xviii, 28. The scriptoria and libraries of numerous monastic communities provided both arsenal and battlefield for those committed to eradicate corrupting influences which concealed the true church. Adhering to the practice of *stabilitas loci*, monks were even discouraged from meeting with family members and friends for fear of spiritual compromise. On a larger scale, this phobia regarding external knowledge was inherent in a number of Ruthenian documents, clearly an Orthodox inheritance which had a profound influence upon that nation's world prospect.

<sup>19</sup> Cyril of Alexandria asserted that the unity of the Byzantine Church is derived from the harmony of true doctrine. See J.N.D. Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines*, 5th ed. (New York: Continuum, 2000), 402.

<sup>20</sup> Isidore of Pelusium (d. 435) asserted that the (Orthodox) Church is the assembly of saints knit together by correct faith and excellent manner of life. (Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines*, 402-3).

<sup>21</sup> Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines*, 403.

<sup>22</sup> Wayne A. Meeks, "Breaking Away: Three New Testament Pictures of Christianity's Separation from the Jewish Communities," in *Essential Papers on Judaism and Christianity in Conflict*, 93-4. Meeks illustrates



the inherent need for conflict as a means of achieving legitimacy.

<sup>23</sup> The scriptural apology for this could be found in 2 Enoch 4:2 where angels mounted patrol in the First Heaven around the planets.

<sup>24</sup> Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines*, 72.

<sup>25</sup> Solovii, *The Byzantine Divine Liturgy*, 44.

<sup>26</sup> Benjamin Harshav, *The Meaning of Yiddish* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1990), 16. To paraphrase the author, when the Jews created their canon, only the text was made sacrosanct and therefore would not bear further addition, not its meanings and possibility for further interpretation. The Byzantines sealed both avenues.

<sup>27</sup> P.E. Stephanou, "Jean Italos: Philosophe et Humaniste," in *Orientalia Christiana Analecta*, no. 134 (Rome: Pontificum Institutum Orientalium Studiorum, 1949), 18-19.

<sup>28</sup> Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines*, 290-91.

<sup>29</sup> The works which made canonization were of Jewish and Jewish-Christian origin, but it should be pointed out that "canon" is relevant only within the Christian tradition and not Judaism.

<sup>30</sup> Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines*, 52-4.

<sup>31</sup> Sozoman, *Ecclesiastical History: A History of the Church from 323-425*, 253.

<sup>32</sup> William Langland, *The Vision of Piers Plowman*, B-Text (London: Everyman, 1987), 5.

<sup>33</sup> Stephanou, "Jean Italos: Philosophe et Humaniste," 22, 24.

<sup>34</sup> *The Apocryphal New Testament*, ed. J.K. Elliott (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 4-6.

<sup>35</sup> *The Protevangelium of James*, 19:1, in *The Apocryphal New Testament*, 64-5.

<sup>36</sup> Letter to Jerome from Bishops Chromatius and Heliodorus, in *The Apocryphal New Testament*, 91-2.

<sup>37</sup> Sozoman, *Ecclesiastical History*, 252.

<sup>38</sup> Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines*, 53.

<sup>39</sup> Douglas Robinson, *Who Translates?: Translator Subjectivities Beyond Reason* (New York: State University of New York Press, 2001), 50-51.

<sup>40</sup> *Hmshe humshi torah, (The Living Torah)*, trans. Aryeh Kaplan in Hebrew and English (New York: Maznaim Publishers, 1981).

<sup>41</sup> See Exodus 20:23 (LXX). For this work, *The Septuagint with Apocrypha: Greek and English*, trans. Sir Lancelot Brenton (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1986) will be used throughout.

<sup>42</sup> LXX, Deuteronomy 5:8-9: "You shall not make images of anything that is in Heaven above and whatever is in the Earth beneath."

<sup>43</sup> True, but it would have been one of the inspiring factors behind the Iconoclast/Iconodule imbroglio.

<sup>44</sup> Recall that Jews and Muslims interpreted the proscription regarding graven images literally, which put them at a disadvantage in converting idol worshippers and animists.

<sup>45</sup> Matthew 5: 17-19.

<sup>46</sup> A casuistry of Jewish origin.

<sup>47</sup> Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines*, 60.

<sup>48</sup> In this work, I am using *Second Enoch* (*The Slavic Apocalypse of Enoch*) in the A (shorter) and J (longer) recensions reproduced in *extensio* in *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha: Apocalyptic Literature and Testaments*, vol. 1, ed. James H. Charlesworth (New York: Doubleday, 1983), 102-213.

<sup>49</sup> In Genesis 6, scant mention is given to the "sons of Heaven" who impregnated earthly women and, unlike I Enoch, the details of their grave sin are absent and there is absolutely nothing to relate their "crime" to the Flood.

<sup>50</sup> I Enoch 7:2-6, in *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, 1:16.

<sup>51</sup> M.I. Artamonov, *Istoriia khazar* (Leningrad: Izd-vo Gospod Ermitazha, 1962), 330-1; 372-3.

<sup>52</sup> Kathleen Corrigan, *Visual Polemics in Ninth-Century Byzantine Psalters* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 78-9.

<sup>53</sup> Yosef Levanon, *Jewish Travelers in the Twelfth Century* (Lanham, Maryland: University Press of America, 1980), 100-101.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, 104-5.

<sup>55</sup> Levanon, 44-8.

<sup>56</sup> Steven Bowman, *The Jews of Byzantium 1204-1453* (Birmingham: University of Alabama Press, 1985), 115. Bowman contends that Jewish conversions to Christianity in Constantinople were low, but that they occurred at all testifies to the proximity and communion, no matter how slight, between the two groups, which would have been a concern of Church officials.

<sup>57</sup> In his *The Sack of Jerusalem* (614), Antiochus Strategos maintains that the Jews offered the Christians their lives in return for conversion to Judaism. Furthermore the Persians, who were the besiegers, favored the Jews "because they were the betrayers of Christians." The Jews may not have had the army, but their theological proximity was as devastating as if they had. Taken from *Internet Medieval Sourcebook* from a translation by F. Conybeare, "Antiochus Strategos' Account of the Sack of Jerusalem (614)," *English Historical Review* 25 (1910), 506-508; reprinted in Deno Geanakoplos, *Byzantium* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), 334-335, 266-267.

<sup>58</sup> Artamonov, 264-5.

<sup>59</sup> Khazar irredentism in the eighth century at the expense of Byzantine

integrity not only made the Turks appear as the hoards of the Antichrist but, owing to the apocryphal account of Kirill's mission to them and its nominal success, the Jews were perceived similarly. See Artamonov, *Istoriia Khazar*, 193, 200.

<sup>60</sup> Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines*, 65-66.

<sup>61</sup> Scholasticus, *Ecclesiastical History*, 130.

<sup>62</sup> *St. Cyril of Jerusalem and St. Gregory Nazianzen*, in *Nicene and post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*, vol. 7, second series (Grand Rapids, 1974), 282.

<sup>63</sup> This statement reveals a very interesting facet of the Byzantine Orthodox psyche. Often, individuals disposed like Nazianzen actually believed themselves to be in such spiritual proximity with Christ, both historically and presently, that they shared his passion, not unlike St. Francis of Assisi. As another service, consider what Strategos related in his *Sack of Jerusalem* when the Christians rejoiced at their deaths since their blood was expiation for Christ's and their deaths a return for His death. A queer variant of *lex talionis* where the plaintiffs (i.e., Christian sinners) are actually edified through destructive retribution.

<sup>64</sup> *St. Cyril of Jerusalem and St. Gregory Nazianzen*, in *Nicene and post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*, vol. 7, second series (Grand Rapids, 1974), 338; 345.

<sup>65</sup> Gregory Nazianzen, *Christus Patiens*, trans. and ed. Andre Tuiler in Greek and French (Paris: Editions du Cerf, 1969), 125.

<sup>66</sup> There is a consensus among biblical scholars that this unnamed individual is John, son of Zebedee, the supposed author of the Johannine Gospel. See Gail R. O'Day, "The Gospel of John: Introduction, Commentary, and Reflections," in *The New Interpreter's Bible* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1995), 498. One other point which bears mention here is that the Johannine Gospel was a favorite instrument of Christian missionaries since it provided a more complete life of Christ than the Synoptics. It also placed the "blame" for Christ's passion squarely upon the Jews.

<sup>67</sup> Nazianzen, *Christus Patiens*, 157.

<sup>68</sup> It should be noted here that, though the French translation of this event is fairly faithful, translating directly from the Greek into English renders the statement: "What assembly of the Jews imposed the decree of death?" Anyone conversant with Roman law in Palestine and the Book of John will recognize that the rabbinate was denied this power. Only the Roman governor or the procurator *in loco* could make such a decree and only if there was a substantial threat to Roman security. St. Gregory is merely following the New Testament gloss of the Jewish rejection being held as the primary cause of the crucifixion.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid., 160, 187-9, 261.

<sup>70</sup> *Apostol* (Lviv: n.p., 1630), 9. See also Jacques de Saroug, *Homélies contre les Juifs*, trans. Micheline Albert (Turnhout: Brepols, 1976), homily I: 55.

<sup>71</sup> *About the Harrowing of Hell (Slovo o zbureniu pekla): A Seventeenth-Century Ukrainian Play in its European Context*, in English and Ruthenian, trans. Irena R. Makaryk (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 1989), 154-6, lines 130-170.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid., 159, lines 297-98.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid., 165-66, lines 499-504.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid., 166, lines 508-9.

<sup>75</sup> This will be considered later in greater detail.

<sup>76</sup> Comparable to those figures in William Langland's *Piers the Plowman* and John Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress*.

<sup>77</sup> *Apostol*, 17.

<sup>78</sup> John Meyendorff, *Byzantine Theology: Historical Trends and Doctrinal Themes* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1979), 10. This will be examined in fuller detail later one.

<sup>79</sup> *Apostol*, 52, 54-6. Studite monks considered it a normal condition to be in constant conflict with the world and whatever it represented. See Meyendorff, *Byzantine Theology*, 57.

<sup>80</sup> *Apostol*, 35.

<sup>81</sup> Even at present, the quest for "pure-blooded Rusyns," is a Sisyphean preoccupation of some ethnic polemicists. See Fedor Aristov, *Literaturnoe razvitiie podkarpatskoi (ugorskoi) rusi* (Moscow, s.n., 1995), 18-19, and Volodimir Fedinshinets, *Mira nasha rusin'ska put* (Preshov: Rusyn'ska Obroda, 1992), 5.

<sup>82</sup> Marvin Kantor, *Medieval Slavic Lives* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1983), 109.

<sup>83</sup> Kantor, 46-7.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid., 47.

<sup>85</sup> A.P. Hayman, ed., *The Disputation of Sergius the Stylite Against a Jew*, Syriac and English (Louvain: Secretariat du Corpusco, 1973), 6.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid., 25-7.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid., 31-3.

<sup>88</sup> Meyendorff, *Byzantine Theology*, 22.

<sup>89</sup> Jacob of Sarug, *Homelies contre les Juifs*, 53.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid., 71, 81, 99, 237-40.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid., 113-121.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid., 169, 179.

<sup>93</sup> One example of this phenomenon is related in the *Duma about Marusia from Bohuslav* where Marusia, the daughter of a Ruthenian priest, was

captured by the Turks and later "turned infidel." Though she still possessed the memory of and reverence for her former Christian homeland, it is clear from the *Duma* that she could never return either physically or spiritually. See *Ukrainian Duma*, trans. George Tarnawsky and Patricia Kilina (Cambridge: Harvard Ukrainian Research Institute, 1979), 36-41.

<sup>94</sup> Robert L. Wilken, *John Chrysostom and the Jews: Rhetoric and Reality in the Late Fourth Century* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983), 16.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*, 15-16, 34-35.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*, 35, 67-68.

<sup>97</sup> The Sephardim were particularly welcoming to outsiders who wanted to learn from them and engage in intellectual intercourse.

<sup>98</sup> Wilken, *John Chrysostom and the Jews*, 83. See also *Apostol*, 4. Some even believed that the Jewish language was a sinful language. Also Chrysostom would have known, as would Constantine, of Clement of Alexandria's *Stomateis* where he declared that the way of sinners was understanding the Jews. See *Stomateis: Books One to Three*, trans. John Ferguson (Washington, D.C.: CUA Press, 1991), 203.

<sup>99</sup> Wayne Meeks seems to believe that the Johannine community responsible for the Gospel's general demeanor was that they were probably *aposynagogoi*, Jewish Christians expelled from the synagogue and Knesset Yisrael. See Meeks, "Breaking Away," in *Essential Papers on Judaism and Christianity*, 91.

<sup>100</sup> Paul Schaff, ed., *Chrysostom's Homilies on the Gospel of St. John and the Epistle to the Hebrews*, in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, vol. 14., first series (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1994), 32.

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*, 115-17.

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*, 173.

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid.*, 197-8.

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid.*, 254.

<sup>105</sup> Their martyrdom was compared to that of two Edessine confessors, Shmona and Guria, who were executed for refusing to renounce the Orthodox Christian faith in favor of paganism. See *Euphemia and the Goth*, ed. and trans. Francis Burkitt (Amsterdam: APA-Philo Press, 1981), 103-4.

<sup>106</sup> In the preliminary directions of the *Profession of Faith from the Church of Constantinople*, the would-be catechumen had to denounce the whole Hebrew people and all of their superstitions. From *Assemani, Cod. Lit.*, 105. From *Internet Medieval Sourcebook*, taken from James Parkes, *The Conflict of the Church and the Synagogue: A Study in the Origins of Antisemitism* (New York: Atheneum, 1934), 394-400.

<sup>107</sup> Ibid.

<sup>108</sup> From the *Internet Medieval Sourcebook*. *Profession of Faith of Uncertain Eastern Origin Attached to the Clementine Recognitions*, from P.G., 1456, cited in Parkes, *The Conflict of the Church and the Synagogue*, 394-400.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid.

<sup>110</sup> *A Letter from Jacob of Edessa to John the Stylite*, trans. Karl-Erik Rignell in Syriac and English (Malmo: Gleerup Publishing, 1979), 65-6.

<sup>111</sup> In Torah, specifically *Torah Chai'im*, trans. Aryeh Kaplan in Hebrew and English (New York: Maznaim, 1981), Vaikra Tazria (Leviticus 12), regarding childbirth, women were considered unclean in the least of all circumstances after giving birth to a boy (seven days of immediate impurity and then thirty-three days of secondary impurity before she could be readmitted to the assembly). If a girl, the impurity calculus was double. More immediately, Leviticus 6:21 claims that anyone violating the laws governing impurity would be cut off completely from Knesset Yisrael, and this is repeated in the LXX. Where there is some moderation is in Archary Moth (Leviticus 18:19) where Torah declares anyone coming near a woman during her impurity tenure is guilty of a sexual offense, whereas the LXX claims that to approach would uncover her nakedness, a milder peccadillo. Furthermore, in Leviticus 18:15, Torah declares that the Lord declared that the laws be kept so that one might live, the alternative being death. This same passage in the LXX amends this passage to read: "so that a man may live in them (i.e., the laws)." Jacob of Edessa seems to assume a Mosaic posture in these two instances as do other Byzantine aesthetics. The more moderating tones of the Septuagint were translated into the 1581 *Ostryz'ka Biblia* (Winnipeg: St. Andrews College, 1981) still evincing the "marriage" of Jewish theology to Christian beliefs.

<sup>112</sup> *A Letter from Jacob of Edessa to John the Stylite*, 62-3.

<sup>113</sup> *St. Cyril of Jerusalem and St. Gregory Nazianzen*, in *Nicene and Post-nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*, vol. 7, second series (Grand Rapids, 1974), 338-9.

<sup>114</sup> Constantine (Cyril) shared this disposition with such clerics as Jacob of Sarug, Bishop of Batna. See Jacques de Saroug, *Homélie contre les Juifs*, 69.

<sup>115</sup> This literacy issue is still a forensic one. Supposedly during his stay in Kherson, Constantine found the Gospels and Psalter in Russian letters. See Kantor, *Medieval Slavic Lives*, 43.

<sup>116</sup> From *Vita Constantini* as cited in Marvin Kantor, *Medieval Slavic Lives* (Ann Arbor, 1983), 67.

<sup>117</sup> Artamonov, *Istoriia Khazar*, 238-9.

<sup>118</sup> Ibid., 330-1.

<sup>119</sup> Artamatov, *Istoriia Khazar*, 327-8, 372-3.

<sup>120</sup> The fundamental duty of the Holy Fathers was to understand and carry out the spiritual truths and illuminate apostolic awareness. If Constantine did not dare to place himself in the same company, he at least realized that he was employed in a similar capacity and that his errors would not be easily forgiven before God, the Divine Judge. See *Kniga pavil sviatykh apostol, sviatykh soborov vselenskikh i pomestnykh I sviatykh otets v trekh chastiakh* (Canada, n.p. 1971), 19.

<sup>121</sup> Meyendorff, *Byzantine Theology*, 73. This, after 843, was the prescribed punishment for heretics which, technically, Constantine would have been if he had introduced any innovation to the ostensibly perfect Canon.

<sup>122</sup> St. Gregory Nazianzen, *Vo slavu boga* (Moscow: n.p., 1798), 34.

<sup>123</sup> This inheritance from the Byzantine Church was expressed in a number of later Slavic texts. Church Law was Christ's Law and all must be observed. See *Apostol*, 35. The laws of the Church are known to all who are wise. See Fedor Polikarpov-Orlov, *Bukvar* (Moscow: n.p., 1701), 23.

<sup>124</sup> Lowell Clucas, *The Trial of John Italos and the Crisis of Intellectual Values in Byzantium in the Eleventh Century* (Munich: Institut für Byzantinistik Neugriechische Philologie und Byzantinische Kunstgeschichte der Universität, 1978), 1-2.

<sup>125</sup> Ibid., 6.

<sup>126</sup> Constantine would have known that Satan was the cause of all heresy and also those who committed evil after baptism were already condemned to Gehenna. See the eighth-century text, R. Hugh Connolly, ed., *Didascalia Apostolorum*, Latin and English from the Syriac original (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1929), 38; 199.

<sup>127</sup> St. Gregory Nazianzen, in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Church*, 287.

<sup>128</sup> St. Gregory Nazianzen, *Vo slavu boga*, 61.

<sup>129</sup> Margarita Mladenova, *Kirilo-Methodieva geografiia i ezikovai istoriia ili zapadnite slaviani, Kiril i Metodii i kakov e (o) stanalo posle* (Sophia: Kheron Press, 1999), 17.

<sup>130</sup> Clement of Alexandria, *Stomateis*, 13.

<sup>131</sup> *Vita Methodii* as cited in Kantor, *Medieval Slavic Lives*, 125.

<sup>132</sup> Ebenezer Henderson, *Biblical Researches and Travels in Russia Including a Tour of Crimea and the Passage of the Caucasus* (London: J. Nisbet, 1829), 72-3. See also Gerhard Podskalsky, *Christentum und Theologische Literatur in der Kiever Rus 988-1237* (Munich: C.H. Beck, 1982), 59.

<sup>133</sup> Henderson, *Biblical Researches and Travels in Russia*, 80.

<sup>134</sup> No sane Christian had ever seen the Devil *in corpore*, but more than a few had seen Jews in that state. If one remembers that "Satan," in its original context, was a minor figure whose name meant "adversary" in the sense of opposing counsel in a court trial, it is not difficult to see how the Jews became "satanized" in the popular imagination.

<sup>135</sup> Francis Mares, *An Anthology of Church Slavonic Texts of Western (Czech) Origin* (Munich: Fink, 1979), 65. Recall that in his Tevye tales, specifically in the cycle which made up *A Fidler oyfn Doch* (A Fiddler on the Roof), Scholem Aleichem had Golde use this same expression in casting away Tevye's alleged nightmare regarding Tseitel's impending wedding to Lazar Wolf.

<sup>136</sup> *Ibid.*, 67.

<sup>137</sup> *Ibid.*, 69. In this instance, this line was taken from the *Prayer to the Holy Trinity*, dated from the second half of the eleventh century from the Sazava Monastery.

<sup>138</sup> The same could be said for the term "raba." In translating from the New Testament into Slavic, it was perhaps the only equivalent to "servant" which would have been in keeping with the intended meaning.

<sup>139</sup> Ihor Sevcenko, *Byzantium and the Slavs in Letters and Culture* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1991), 164.

<sup>140</sup> Mares, *An Anthology of Church Slavonic Texts of Western (Czech) Origins*, 75-6.

<sup>141</sup> Corrigan, *Visual Polemics in Ninth-Century Byzantine Psalters*, 47.

<sup>142</sup> *Ibid.*, 60-1.

<sup>143</sup> Nina Garsoian, *The Paulician Heresy: A Study in the Origin and Development of Paulicianism in Armenia and the Eastern Provinces of the Byzantine Empire* (Paris: Mouton, 1967), 167. Garsoian also points out the fallacy among some of identifying the Paulicians as either a sect or a new version of Manichaeism. In *The Alexiad of Anna Comnena*, the Paulicians (in some other texts known as Publicans) are associated with the Bogomils. *The Alexiad of Anna Comnena*, trans. E.R.A. Sewter (New York: Penguin Press, 1969), 463, 496.

<sup>144</sup> Podskalsky, *Christentum und Theologische Literatur in der Kiever Rus 988-1237*, 173. This was probably the inspiration for the woodcut in Polikarpov-Orlov's *Bukvar* where Sts. John Chrysostom and Alexi were situated on the Madonna's right, while Sts. Peter and Paul were on her left.

<sup>145</sup> Corrigan, *Visual Polemics in Ninth-Century Byzantine Psalters*, 82.

<sup>146</sup> Paul Magocsi, *A History of Ukraine* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1997), 166.

<sup>147</sup> Zenon E. Kohut, "The Image of Jews in Ukraine's Intellectual Tradi-



tion: The Role of *Istoriia Rusov*," in *Cultures and Nations of Central and Eastern Europe: Essays in Honor of Roman Szporluk*, eds. Zvi Gitelman et al. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998), 345-6, 349. An interesting parallel to this situation is found in nineteenth-century Russian Jewish literature where the Jews were barred from High Holiday observances owing to arrears owed to the local Orthodox clergy who held the lease on the land upon which the synagogue stood.

<sup>148</sup> Some examples of these were *The Lament of the Captives*, *The Falcon and the Falcon-Child*, and *The Lament of the Cuckoo*, in *Ukrainian Dumy*, 22-29, 42-45, 105.

<sup>149</sup> *Kostomarov's Books of Genesis of the Ukrainian People*, commentary by B. Yanivs'kyi (New York: Research Program on the U.S.S.R, 1954), 32-4, 37-8.

<sup>150</sup> *Ibid.*, 39-40.

<sup>151</sup> *Ibid.*, 40-1. See also Sevchenko, 169.

<sup>152</sup> Kostomarov's rationale in this instance may have been motivated by the conception that Jews circumcised their slaves and made them Jews in accordance with the Abrahamic covenant in the Book of Genesis. If one was a Jew, one could not become a Christian and, ostensibly, a member of the Host.

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## **Holy Scripture, Interpretation and Spiritual Cognition in St. Symeon the New Theologian**

THEODORE STYLIANOPOULOS

In reaction to the disintegrating aspects of modern biblical studies prevalent in academic circles, as is well known, a number of scholars have called for a corrective shift toward greater attention to the canonical authority, unity, theology and spirituality of the Bible.<sup>1</sup> In particular, a small but increasing number of scholars has looked to the patristic tradition for both inspiration and direction in the recovery of Holy Scripture as the word of God integrally connected to the Church, tradition, doctrine, liturgy, prayer and spiritual life.<sup>2</sup> In this paper I aim to reflect on the Orthodox side of this hermeneutical discussion with chief reference to a single Church Father, St. Symeon the New Theologian (949-1022). In doing so, my purpose is four-fold: 1) to present St. Symeon's understanding of Scripture and its interpretation by means of a close reading of his works;<sup>3</sup> 2) to engage the discussion of St. Symeon's views with the hermeneutical positions of contemporary Orthodox biblical scholars and theologians; 3) to offer some comments on the status of the hermeneutical question in Orthodoxy today, and 4) to review my own hermeneutical position by way of invitation for further discussion.

### **THE NATURE AND ROLE OF SCRIPTURE**

St. Symeon lived and worked in the context of the life of

the Great Church of Constantinople where he served and taught as monk and abbot, attracting devoted adherents as well as unrelenting enemies.<sup>4</sup> An heir to the monastic, liturgical, dogmatic and ecclesiastical tradition of Eastern Christianity, he fully shared the classical patristic view of the unquestioned authority, unity and primacy of Scripture as divine revelation. For him the Bible was not merely an ancient record of the oracles of God but the living voice of God heralding the way of salvation to each generation. For example, in an extensive admonition to negligent monks on the appropriate conduct of monastic life, he writes among other things:

Do you not tremble, O man, when you hear God day by day saying to you through the whole of sacred Scripture, "Let no evil talk come out of your mouths" (Eph 4:29)... Have you not heard that God is Judge... What does He say? "He who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart" (Mt 5:28).<sup>5</sup>

In the same discourse he refers to the Bible as the "divinely inspired Scriptures" and "the word of God," invoking the biblical metaphors of the "two-edged sword" (Heb 4:12) and "burning fire" (Jer 20:9).<sup>6</sup> Because the Scriptures clearly reveal the will of God and provide unfailing guidance toward salvation, they are to be studied with utmost diligence and to be obeyed with absolute care not only by scholars but all Christians:

We need great soberness, great zeal, much searching of the divine Scriptures. The Savior has [said]: "Search the Scriptures" (Jn 5:39). Search them and hold fast to what they say with great exactitude and faith, in order that you may know God's will clearly from the divine Scriptures and be able infallibly (ἀπτάστως) to distinguish good from evil (Heb 5:14)... Nothing is so conducive for saving us as the following of the divine precepts of the Savior.<sup>7</sup>

St. Symeon nowhere takes up the question of the nature or role of the Bible as separate topics for discussion. His many references to and innumerable citations from Scripture in terms either of phraseology or entire passages amply demonstrate his exalted view of the Bible as divinely inspired, absolutely authoritative, infallible,<sup>8</sup> and in full harmony with the whole stream of tradition in all its forms – dogmatic, liturgical, monastic, catechetical, devotional and ecclesiastical. For him, truly, it can be said that Scripture is known as “Scripture *in* Tradition” according to the catchy expression of John Breck’s new title.<sup>9</sup>

However, the intriguing hermeneutical element resident in St. Symeon’s extraordinary witness in the religious world of his time is precisely his reliance on and use of Scripture to *critique the prevailing view and practice of the operative religious tradition by clerics, monks, theologians, state officials and lay people alike*. To put it concisely, St. Symeon’s bold and prophetic call for radical renewal within the Church, a highly controversial position that in part led to his condemnation and lengthy exile at the hands of the ecclesiastical authorities, had to do with nothing less than his critique that the truth of the apostolic gospel was swallowed up in an ocean of religious formalism unable to bear the words of a prophetic and evangelical voice.

St. Symeon’s biblical position may be defined in terms of two major points. The first point has to do with his constant, direct and abundant use of Scripture. Virtually not a single page of his writings can be found without references to the Bible, whether by allusion, or explicit use of biblical phraseology, or even collections of scriptural citations. This feature of his writings is by no means insignificant. Canon 19 of the Quinisext Council (691) had already decreed that biblical interpreters had to adhere to the fixed interpretations of the Church Fathers and not follow their own minds in their work.<sup>10</sup> Because of the enormous influence of the

earlier heritage of the great Doctors of the Church, such as Athanasius, Basil, Chrysostom and others, as well as the understandable fear of heresy resulting from previous theological controversies, it was a time in Byzantium marked by the development of chains of patristic interpretations on biblical passages (ἀνθολόγια.) This tendency toward traditionalism eventually led to a deep reservation about the private reading of the Bible in the Orthodox Church, particularly after the Reformation, a tendency not unknown even today. However, in St. Symeon, just as in the case of the earlier great Church Fathers, we find ample evidence not only of direct and abundant use of Scripture, but also explicit directives to all Christians to “search the Scriptures” according to the words of the Lord (Jn 5:39).<sup>11</sup> Here is an author who, without the benefit of professional university training, let us say such as St. Photius the Great earlier, is imbued with the language, teachings and spiritual sensibilities of the biblical witness. St. Symeon thus serves as a luminous example of an ordinary Christian and later fervent monastic who devoted his life to the study of Scripture, and so taught others to do, for the proclamation and actualization of the biblical message.

The second point pertains to St. Symeon’s theological conviction that the divine revelation contained in the Scriptures is the decisive criterion of truth for faith and life. In other words, the Scriptures for him provide the bedrock theological grounding of his theology and spirituality. He writes:

Nothing whatever is more profitable for the soul which has chosen to study God’s law day and night than searching the divine scriptures. The meaning of the Holy Spirit’s grace is hidden in them. It fills a man’s spiritual perception with every pleasure, lifts it entirely from earthly things and the lowliness of what is visible, and makes it both angelic in form and a sharer in the angels’ very life.<sup>12</sup>

Elsewhere he speaks of the nourishment of the heart with the living bread of the word, the wine of the knowledge of God, and the divine grace of the Spirit to be discovered in the Bible.<sup>13</sup>

St. Symeon, of course, is cognizant of the lives and teachings of the Church Fathers who preceded him. From time to time he cites examples from their lives and on rare occasions he also quotes from their writings. He claims that his message is in harmony with both the Scriptures as well as the Fathers. He also assumes and is certainly governed by the doctrinal tradition of the Church as he sings and expounds the mystery of God in the Bible. Nevertheless, for St. Symeon, as far as direct focus and reliance for truth and guidance in life, nothing can compare with ceaseless focus on the primacy of the testimony of Holy Scripture. In his extensive spiritual and theological expositions, he not only builds his case almost exclusively on biblical texts, but also repeats an authoritative refrain that he gives “no advice beyond that which is in the commandments of God and the divine Scriptures.”<sup>14</sup> “Everything I have said is true, is in accordance with the divine and God-inspired Scriptures... Believe, follow the Holy Scriptures, and do whatever they tell you, and you will find everything without exception to be as it is written.”<sup>15</sup> His actual appeal to the Church Fathers seems minimal in comparison with the invocation of the authority of Scripture as the ground of truth. For example, in a lengthy discourse on the experiential gift of the Spirit and the new creation in Christ, he gives a single, brief citation from St. Basil the Great while the whole of his exposition is replete with biblical texts. As he concludes, he exhorts:

Believe first of all that these things are true and in accordance with the Holy Scriptures and, by studying the latter thoroughly, know that here, already, the seal of the Holy Spirit is given to those who believe. And, having believed, pursue it so that you may obtain.... Run, fight, pursue, seek,

knock, ask, and incline toward nothing else until you have obtained it... until you hear: 'Well done, good and faithful servant; you have been faithful over a little, I will set you over much' (Mt. 25:21); until you have become children of the light and of the day.<sup>16</sup>

Thus we can raise the first major hermeneutical question in Orthodox theology today – the relationship between Scripture and tradition. What is more correct to say hermeneutically, “Scripture *in* Tradition” with John Breck, or “Scripture *and* Tradition” which is the more usual formulation? Of course, both propositions could be reasonably argued. In fact there are instances, as in the case of St. Symeon, where for the sake of the truth of the gospel one could even speak of “Scripture *verses* tradition,” instances where the actual life of the Church may have departed from a full understanding of the scriptural witness and the actualization of the good news. Without getting lost in semantics, the issue concerns the interdependence of Scripture and tradition. A balanced discussion of this issue is partly dependent on the definition of terms. Since Scripture is already largely defined by virtue of its canonization, which inevitably distinguishes (not separates) it from tradition, the more problematic term is tradition – small “t” or capital “T” and how would one exactly specify and assess the contents of the broad tradition?

There was no argument between St. Symeon and his theological opponents about the divine character and formal authority of the Bible to which all deferred. But there was sharp disagreement between them on matters pertaining to the very essence of the broad received tradition – what St. Symeon viewed as the apostolic faith and life. In this connection, the whole witness of St. Symeon constituted a crucial biblical critique of the actual and ongoing stream of tradition as apparently understood and lived by the majority of Orthodox Christians in that era. The critique involved Tradition with a capital “T” insofar as it pertained to the



understanding of the gospel, the believer's relationship to Christ and the Spirit, the practice of the sacraments, the role of the priesthood and monasticism, as well as the evangelical virtues of holiness, repentance, love, humility, obedience and others.<sup>17</sup>

This is not the place for a detailed discussion of the hermeneutical relationship between Scripture and tradition, or for an extensive analysis of John Breck's thesis about "Scripture in Tradition."<sup>18</sup> Elsewhere I have expressed my views on the organic continuity and mutual interdependence between the Bible and tradition.<sup>19</sup> Suffice it to say here that, in general and abstract terms, the interplay between sacred texts and ongoing religious traditions evidences parallel dynamics in all religions, including Christianity, Judaism and Islam. Even within the diversity of Christian communities themselves, no community reads the Bible except as "Scripture *in* Tradition," namely, the tradition by which each community defines itself. As far as Orthodox theology is concerned, the canonization of the Scriptures and the massive authority attributed to the Bible by the Church Fathers, including of course St. Symeon the New Theologian, require what is often forgotten: *that the full voice of the biblical witness must be read and studied, kept alive and vibrant, and, when necessary, even critique the life and practice of the Church as empirically observed.* In the words of Thomas Hopko: "Everything in the Church is judged by the Bible. Nothing in the Church may contradict it. Everything in the Church must be biblical."<sup>20</sup>

One of the challenging tasks of Orthodox hermeneutics is to give firm testimony of a proper balance in the explication of the organic unity and interdependence of Bible and tradition. Just as it is critical that the Bible is not severed from tradition, so also it is vital that the overwhelming influence of developing tradition does not overshadow the biblical witness as in the case of aspects of the practice of

the Church in St. Symeon's era. The fact that Holy Scripture emerges from the very womb of tradition, and Scripture is itself canonized holy tradition, by no means legitimizes an uncritical control of the broader tradition over Scripture, because then the canonization of Scripture as a standard of truth would be meaningless.

A brief constructive critique of John Breck's thesis is that it allows too great an opening for an imbalance between Scripture and tradition, favoring the latter to the diminishment of the biblical witness. Indeed, in Fr. Breck's otherwise elegant and substantial scholarship, one misses a significant *biblical critique* of any aspects of contemporary Orthodox theology and practice.<sup>21</sup> It is appropriate for Fr. Breck to demonstrate how Orthodox Mariology, Christology and spirituality stand in harmonious coherence with the Scriptures. It is also equally appropriate that a hermeneutical position both allow and encourage critical light to be shed on such substantive matters as the proclamation of the gospel in the Church, the understanding of leadership in the Church, the vision and practice of ministry, the centrality of Christ and the Spirit in daily life, and the formalism of worship and piety toward the kind of renewal the New Theologian vigorously advocated.<sup>22</sup> To focus on "Scripture *in* Tradition" without equal emphasis on Scripture's authority to speak "to" tradition, and challenge aspects of the accumulated tradition risks a great danger. That danger is that uncritical accumulating tradition can and does both co-opt and silence the prophetic and evangelical voice of the Scripture so powerfully heralded by the New Theologian.

### THE STUDY AND INTERPRETATION OF SCRIPTURE

The use of Scripture and appeals to biblical texts unavoidably raise questions about method, hermeneutical presuppositions, and the soundness of exegetical results, whether implicitly

or explicitly. Orthodox theologians and biblical scholars have long discussed these matters, especially in the light of the fact that modern biblical criticism is acknowledged to be largely a Western development, intertwined with problematic presuppositions of the Enlightenment, despite some of its precedents in Christian antiquity among Alexandrian and Antiochene Christian scholars. Today, virtually all Orthodox biblical scholars, and most Orthodox theologians, support the use of critical historical studies of the Bible. Biblical departments in Orthodox universities and seminaries confirm this fact. Yet deep ambiguities remain about the extent of interaction with the style and methodologies of international biblical scholarship. Rare among us is the Orthodox biblical scholar who has not felt at one time or another what John Breck honestly discloses in his preface – a failure to minister to our students' needs by giving lectures as "exercises in [historical and literary] analysis" rather than as "a living and life-giving witness" to the word of God.<sup>23</sup> The hermeneutical task of defining a distinct and more universally acceptable Orthodox approach to biblical studies, especially concerning the relationship of historical studies and Christian doctrine, modern methodologies and the patristic exegetical heritage, biblical interpretation and liturgy, as well as academic scholarship and spirituality, remains an open-ended issue in Orthodox theological scholarship.<sup>24</sup>

In what ways can St. Symeon the New Theologian help us in this task? In his works St. Symeon makes no explicit comments on formal matters of interpretation. On occasion he will offer allegorizing explications of texts. For example, for him Christ's words, "I was hungry and you gave me no food" (Mt 25:35), meant not material food as much as spiritual food for those who desperately need it and by which Christ is truly fed.<sup>25</sup> Less frequently he refers to traditional typological interpretations, such as to the seven days of creation as a type of seven ages to come and the garden of Paradise as a

sign of the eternal kingdom.<sup>26</sup> However, apart from these rare examples, St. Symeon largely counts on the plain meaning of texts as they stand grammatically and syntactically, with various degrees of attention to context, as most homilists and some theologians do even today. He takes for granted the unity of Scripture to the extent that he can freely quote and combine texts from any book of the Bible. Although he is aware that the meaning of a text can be forced and twisted,<sup>27</sup> he nevertheless assumes that the plain voice of Scripture can be heard by all who resolve to engage it with care and are willing to listen and apply its message.

However, a striking and paradoxical aspect of his use of Scripture is, on the one hand, his incessant admonitions to study it diligently and, on the other, his repeated warnings not to meddle in vain disputations. How can this be possible? His own work indicates that in his youth prior to and especially after his first mystical experience, St. Symeon engaged in direct and concentrated study of Bible.<sup>28</sup> As an inspired interpreter and teacher, according to his own claims, he thoroughly studied the Scriptures, collecting and memorizing texts for particular purposes, and producing an impressive corpus of biblical teachings particularly on his favorite topic of the new life in Christ, the resurrection of the soul as a present reality, indeed, the new adult baptism by the Holy Spirit of which Christ spoke to Nicodemus (Jn 3:1ff.).<sup>29</sup> Nor was he hesitant to engage in theological disputes on such subjects as the Holy Trinity, predestination, and the question of whether the glorified saints had knowledge of one another in the afterlife,<sup>30</sup> expositions all essentially based on the Bible. Although he regarded these questions as meddling, they needed nevertheless to be addressed by correct teaching. In principle and by necessity, St. Symeon did not therefore reject systematic, that is, scholarly study as such. Yet his views were governed by a clear vision of what for him defined appropriate focused study of Scripture, a vision whose elements are

momentously instructive for biblical scholars in every age.

The first major element in his hermeneutical vision is an unremitting attention to the central purpose of biblical study, namely the explication of the good news of Christ and the way of salvation. In his *First Ethical Discourse*, commenting on his own task inspired and illuminated by the Spirit, St. Symeon explains at length that his purpose is threefold: to clarify the mystery of the new creation in Christ; to manifest Christ's love in this manner, and to have all his readers share in the promised blessing of being brothers and sisters to Christ, a blessing by grace equal to that of the apostles.<sup>31</sup> In the same context of the discussion about not inquiring into matters pertaining to life after death, he continues:

Let us be persuaded by the Master who says: "Search the Scriptures" (Jn 5:39). Search, that is, and not meddle! Search the Scriptures and do not busy yourselves with disputes which lie outside the sacred writings [i.e., direct knowledge of mysteries beyond death]. Search the Scriptures so that you may learn about faith, and hope, and love.... Why should we busy ourselves with matters which are beyond us, in particular when in truth we fail to see things which lie at our very feet?<sup>32</sup>

He nevertheless takes on the task of answering at length the meddling question and shows that indeed the glorified saints enjoy mutual conscious knowledge in heaven.

For St. Symeon, meddling questions and vain disputes were those that detracted from the central purpose of biblical study, a task which is simultaneously both theocentric and soteriological – to attain to the knowledge of and personal participation in the mystery of God as testified by Scripture. The "treasure" to be found in the biblical texts is the living Christ by the power of the Spirit. Through the Scriptures God speaks to those who sit in darkness that they may see the great light that shines in the present just as much as in the days of the apostles.<sup>33</sup> The pastoral ministry of "tending the

sheep” is to teach the faithful “to have untroubled, sincere, and unhesitating faith in Me [Christ], to love Me with all their soul and all their mind, just as I have loved them... Teach them the communion that comes by their doing and fulfilling the commandments.”<sup>34</sup> The Scriptures present many precepts, various ways and many works of righteous persons, but there is really one and the same path for all, one goal and destination, one city to be reached – the holy Zion, the kingdom of heaven, the place where believers reign with Christ – and that realm is the realm of the holy and undivided trinity of faith, hope and love, already shared by believers and summed up in Christ who is addressed as “Holy Love.”<sup>35</sup> Why study the Bible? St. Symeon’s answer is clear and immediate:

Take heed how you listen! Christ our God says, “Search the Scriptures” (Jn 5:39). Why does He say this? First, that we may be taught the way that leads to salvation. Second, that by practicing the commandments we may walk without turning aside, and attain to the salvation of our souls (11 Pt 1:9). What, then, is our salvation? Jesus Christ... the good news of great joy... Christ the Lord (Lk 2:10f.).<sup>36</sup>

The second major element in St. Symeon’s vision of sound biblical study is an unyielding emphasis on *praxis* – the Scriptures must be not merely heard but also obeyed, not merely read but applied, not only studied but actualized by embracing and living the precepts they teach and command. It is in this regard that the Saint makes innumerable references to his own experience, not as one who had formal training as a scholar but as one who practiced what he discovered in the Bible. The main thing is “to walk in the light of the divine Scriptures and go in the way of God’s commandments.”<sup>37</sup> In his *First Theological Discourse* he excoriates the “modern theologians” of his time who analyze spiritual mysteries only to be admired at banquets and to make a name for themselves. Reliance must be placed not on mere words but on Christian

life and conduct. Without true repentance and following the footsteps of Christ, the Holy Spirit does not open one's mind to the mysteries of Scripture. To conduct analysis without a sense of awe is brash insolence; to teach the things of the Spirit without the Spirit is presumptive pride; to speak of the things of God without spiritual illumination is to theologize on the basis of pseudo-knowledge (1 Tim 6:20). Even if one were to pass through all the degrees of philosophy, the spiritual treasure cannot be won without the diligent practice of the evangelical precepts of faith, repentance, confession of sins, humility and the like.<sup>38</sup>

St. Symeon's emphasis on the necessary integration of biblical study and spiritual life is most explicit in *Catechetical Discourse* 24. Here he draws a clear hermeneutical differentiation between "spiritual knowledge" (πνευματικὴ γνῶσις) and ordinary intellectual knowledge, what he calls "secular (or worldly) and pagan knowledge" (κοσμικὴ καὶ ἑλληνικὴ γνῶσις) as applicable to biblical study. His case for a spiritual reading of the Bible may be summed up as follows.<sup>39</sup> True spiritual knowledge is enshrined in "the Gospel of Christ and in the other divine Scriptures," likened to a treasure chest containing God's commandments and unutterable blessings that sparkle like pearls of light and life. Ordinary secular learning can master the Scriptures to the extent that the chest can be carried on the erudite scholar's shoulders. One can memorize all the Scriptures and freely quote them. Nevertheless the chest remains completely closed to those who have not practiced the commandments. No human wisdom can open the chest. "Nor is it by Scripture that the contents of Scripture become clear" because spiritual knowledge has to do not with the letter of Scripture, that is, mere conceptual knowledge of its contents, but with the Spirit which actualizes the mystical reality of new creation signified by those teachings.

Only Christ himself by the power of the Spirit is able, according to the New Theologian, to unlock the treasure,

which is none other than the personal and conscious revelation of the Lord himself to those who love Him and keep his commandments, just as He promised in Jn 14:21-22. Let no one then be deceived, because spiritual knowledge can be acquired in no other way than through the conscious indwelling of Christ and by participation in all his blessings, such as perfect love of God and neighbor, mortification of the earthly members (Col 3:5), freedom from the oppression of the Devil, renewal by the Spirit, adoption as sons, and endowment with the mind of Christ (1 Cor 2:16). The hermeneutical key is thus not "leaning on the mere study of the Scriptures" but the "uncovering of the eyes of our minds" in those who are "born from above" (Jn 3:3) and are transformed by the Spirit. Otherwise, for those who are "despisers and negligent," despite great learning, the Holy Scriptures remain a sealed book. "The mystical and divine glory and power hidden in them" cannot be disclosed to those evidencing lack of repentance and spiritual blindness in terms of life and conduct.

What implications can be drawn from St. Symeon's hermeneutical vision regarding spiritual knowledge in the study of the Bible? On the one hand, as a zealous prophetic and evangelical voice, he seems to formulate an uncompromising position. The distinction between the two kinds of knowledge is virtually absolute, with no allowance for gray. The intense focus on the saving message of Scripture, as well as on Christian praxis, is such that the Saint attributes little or no value to learning and analysis apart from a committed and fervent Christian life. Perhaps his monastic background inclined him to devalue scholarly preoccupation, just as much as all worldly endeavors, despite the fact that he himself was an educated man, a skillful writer, and not reluctant to engage in controversy over meddling questions. Nor does he consider the possibility that two equally faithful students of the Bible could honestly disagree on a matter either of



contextual exegesis or application of a biblical teaching to new circumstances in the Church's life. Such questions do not arise in the scope of his thought. In this regard, his uncompromising position on "spiritual" and "secular" knowledge can only function as a corrective rather than as an absolute standard. The diversity and development of the Christian tradition, including internal theological disputes, gives ample evidence of a far more complex hermeneutical interaction between faith and culture, spiritual and secular knowledge. The Alexandrian and Antiochene Fathers in their use of the Hellenic heritage for the explication of the gospel serve as powerful examples of the necessity of theological scholarship's conversation with the intellectual currents and methodologies of any given epoch.

On the other hand, as a corrective, St. Symeon's hermeneutical perspective, rooted in Scripture itself and the classic patristic tradition, is highly instructive for exegetical and theological study. Firstly, it reminds us that the Bible is not "like any other book," but a sacred text of the Church whose subject matter is the mystery of the living God in loving engagement with men and women transformed by the encounter. The mystery of God cannot be exhausted by formal studies, whether historical, literary, or theological, as if the Bible were either a collection of ancient human wisdom or a deposit of theological propositions.

Secondly, the purpose of biblical interpretation is not to analyze and in the process dissolve the mystery of God, as much as it is to keep the mystery alive before the Church and the world.<sup>40</sup> But to do so, biblical study must be true to the central message of the Scriptures themselves and their theological claims, as well as to the content of the spiritual realities they proclaim – the good news of redemption from sin and death, the risen Christ, the gift of the Spirit, the new creation, the liberation of life, the hope of the coming kingdom.

And thirdly, Christian interpreters cannot be but just that – Christian – interpreting the Bible as the Christian Bible. In other words, the explication of the revelation of the mystery of God in Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit cannot be apart from the response of faith and obedience leading to the renewal of life within the body that we call the Church. Formal studies are valuable in illuminating historical events, texts, concepts and ancient institutions. But in the end, genuine knowledge of God and fit proclamation of it come by way of personal engagement. “For it is not a matter of solving [the] mystery, but of participating in it.”<sup>41</sup>

### INTERPRETATION AND MYSTICAL COGNITION

In this last section of the paper my intent is not to give an account of St. Symeon’s mystical experiences as such,<sup>42</sup> but to probe further the hermeneutical function of mystical cognition, following up the above discussion about the spiritual and worldly knowledge of the Scriptures. In particular I want to consider the charismatic authority claimed by St. Symeon as an interpreter of Scripture, the contextual elements of mystical cognition, as well as the implications of these matters for Orthodox hermeneutics.

A striking aspect of St. Symeon’s spirituality is his frequent appeal to his own direct experience of the living God in the manner of the prophets, the apostles, as well as the preceding saints. Such appeals infuriated many of his contemporaries who believed that no one in their time could approach the apostolic quality of life in Christ. St. Symeon compared his case to Christ himself who did works of the Spirit but was rejected by those who thus “blasphemed against the Spirit.”<sup>43</sup> He writes:

I perform my ministry to the Spirit ... it is not I who speak great and extraordinary things to your charity, but the Spirit of God ... We minister to you the oracles of God ... He who

fails to believe him who speaks through the Spirit commits a sin and blasphemes against the Spirit (Mk 3:29).<sup>44</sup>

Moreover, he saw himself as part of a living tradition of charismatic saints stretching across the centuries “joined together in the bond of the Spirit... a golden chain... in faith, love and good works... a single chain that cannot be easily be broken.”<sup>45</sup> St. Symeon believed himself to be a living link of this tradition by virtue of his connection with his own now-deceased spiritual elder whom he regarded as a glorified saint and who had blessed him in a similar way as Elijah had blessed Elishah.<sup>46</sup>

On the basis apparently of St. Symeon’s testimony, the late Fr. John Romanides of blessed memory staunchly advocated an exclusive theological and exegetical hermeneutic centered on the paradigm of the charismatic saint,<sup>47</sup> a position of considerable appeal to many Orthodox Christians, not least because of the traditional veneration accorded to saints in the Orthodox Church. According to Romanides, the prophets, apostles and saints, who enjoyed the mystery of divine contemplation and deification (θεωρία and θέωσις), are the unerring prototypes of theological and exegetical study. Not speculative theologians and exegetes who deal merely with words and concepts, but rather only those who have reached a stage of divine illumination, if not full divine union, can correctly speak of things pertaining to God, sharing the “same species of knowledge” as did the prophets and the apostles. It was widely known that Romanides had little regard for the entire enterprise of theological and biblical scholarship, whether Orthodox or not, operative beyond his own exclusive hermeneutical perspective. To quote him in connection with biblical studies:

For the Fathers authority is not only the Bible, but the Bible plus those glorified, to wit the Prophets, Apostles and Saints. The Bible as a book is not in itself either inspired

or infallible. It becomes inspired and infallible within the communion of Saints who have the experience of divine glory described in, but not conveyed by, the Bible. To those outside of the living tradition of *θεωρία* the Bible is a Book which does not unlock its mysteries.<sup>48</sup>

There are several reasons why Romanides' absolute hermeneutical position cannot be supported by the witness of the New Theologian without significant qualifications. To question St. Symeon's understanding of the inspiration, truth, and authority of the canonical Scriptures is to fly in the face of every page he has written. As has been noted above, the Saint's chief reliance in demonstrating his teachings is on the biblical texts themselves to which he continuously appeals and invites his readers to ponder. He is not talking about esoteric knowledge open to an elite class by means of hidden techniques. All are exhorted to study the Scriptures, all can approach its mysteries, all have the capacity to achieve contemplation of its spiritual realities (unless they stubbornly refuse to learn). Why? Because all have been given the ability to do so by God.<sup>49</sup> St. Symeon himself and the saints he invokes are existential examples of what the canonical Scriptures authoritatively proclaim. When he writes "we present to you the truth from divine Scripture and from experience itself to show you the royal way,"<sup>50</sup> he does not imply that he has added something to the truth of Scripture but only that he has embodied that truth in life and conduct. For him, the primary authority lies in the witness and truth of the canonical Scriptures themselves and open to all.

Notable is the fact that, in a parallel way, St. Symeon provides a startling qualification of his own authority with respect both to his hearers/readers and to the Bible. In his great apologia, where he makes some of the highest claims to authority, he nevertheless presents his teaching as his "opinion" open to the judgment of his interlocutors. For his

part, he writes *what he thinks* is the truth (Ἐγὼ μὲν οὖν οὕτως οἶομαι τὴν ἀλήθειαν ἔχειν). For their part, they must see and test what he says (ὕμεις δὲ ἴδετε καὶ δοκιμάσετε τὰ λεγόμενα παρ' ἡμῶν).<sup>51</sup> In speaking this way, he sought to persuade those who presumably had yet shared neither his mystical experiences, nor his spiritual knowledge of the Bible. On what basis are they to see and test his words? Two principles are indicated in the context. One is the common creation of human beings in the image of God, which for the Saint means the endowment of human reason as a gift of God.<sup>52</sup> The other is the primary authority of the Bible “as we establish and assert all things from the Holy Scriptures themselves and clearly demonstrate them.”<sup>53</sup> With regard to those who pervert the teachings of the apostles, it is “from the very divine Scriptures themselves [that] we collect that which strengthens and corrects their thinking and that of their followers.”<sup>54</sup>

The above references show that St. Symeon in his direct appeals to Scripture, as well as in his arduous efforts to persuade his readers through reasonable biblical argument open to all, was largely an heir of the classic patristic tradition which relied on the plain meaning and the principle of the clarity of Scripture. Church Fathers such as Sts. Athanasius, Basil, Gregory the Theologian and John Chrysostom<sup>55</sup> attributed massive authority to the literal meaning of the Bible for secure instruction, understandable by all serious readers, concerning God's will and the way of salvation. For them – granted the inseparable unity of faith, life and study – the plain meaning of Scripture was to be derived by contextual and grammatical exegesis, not by reference to any esoteric methods or appeals to elite individuals. In the face of exegetical diversity and controversy, of which there was no lack in Christian antiquity, the normative interpretation of the Bible took place through open theological debates. Normative hermeneutical positions on great theological

issues were established by the Ecumenical Councils, which represented the whole witness of the Church. Only the various Gnostic groups claimed special revelations, secret teachings and esoteric symbols, unknown to the wider Christian community.

Thus, while we highly value the apostles and saints as witnesses and guides to Christian faith and life, we cannot follow a narrow hermeneutic that converges on the charismatic figure as exclusive authority seemingly raised above the Bible, above the Councils, and above the Church. Such a position would undercut the Church's ongoing direct access to the Bible, as well as the Church's right to test charismatic claims. Just as St. Symeon challenged his readers to test his words by reference to Scripture and the wider tradition, the apostolic advice must remain operative: "Do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits" (1 Jn 4:1).

Nevertheless, the question about the spiritual reading of Scripture remains. What is behind St. Symeon's unending emphasis on spiritual knowledge and spiritual perception of Scripture? I believe the answer lies in his understanding of mystical cognition, as well as the context and ways it manifests itself, and frankly, the answer may be simpler than many have thought (at least initially to grasp, but not necessarily to experience in depth). In *Catechetical Discourse* 35, a stirring review of his life in the form of a prayerful thanksgiving to Christ, the New Theologian relates how he first longed to find the way of salvation, the forgiveness of his sins, and a spiritual guide. And, although he formally knew and could read from the Scriptures about the gift of the Spirit and other blessings of the new creation, he came to see that he essentially knew nothing at all and "remained insensitive to all" (ἀναισθήτως πρὸς πάντα διεκείμεν).<sup>56</sup> He thought that the words of Scripture applied to others in the past or in the world to come, not to the present life. And then, in his spiritual struggles, just as another St. Paul, he

was granted a dramatic vision of Christ as Light, which at first he did not fully understand. He subsequently lapsed into slackness and worse sins.

However, clinging to his spiritual father and in repentance and obedience before God, he finally withdrew altogether from the affairs and pleasures of the world, and once again, but gradually, experienced various levels of transformation up to an experience of heaven itself.<sup>57</sup> Soon he suddenly realized that the King and Creator himself dwelt within St. Symeon as he, even in sleep, was able to fight off recurring sexual fantasies. It was in such ways of struggle and spiritual growth that he continued to gain deeper insight into his previous spiritual deadness, the veil of insensitivity (κάλυμμα ἀναισθησίας, cf. 2 Cor 3:14ff.), namely, the power of sin and evil passions. These Christ in Symeon dissolved bit by bit just as the sun dissolves a thick mist.<sup>58</sup> The Saint's soul was cleansed and his mind's eyes were opened to the singular truth of his life's message: that the living God himself as testified by Scripture "appears clearly and is consciously known (ἐμφανῶς δείκνυται καὶ γνωρίζεται πάνυ γνωστῶς), and even speaks as a friend "face to face" (Ex 33.11) to those who love and sincerely seek Him.<sup>59</sup> This is the great truth, the burning love, the intoxicating joy to which St. Symeon again and again, and the saints as well testify, in whom Christ and the Spirit dwell and live and move. He writes about the living Christ:

He [Christ] becomes in them all the things about which you hear in the divine Scriptures concerning the kingdom of heaven – a pearl, a mustard seed, leaven, water, fire, bread, drink of life... a lamp, bed, marriage bed, wedding chamber, bridegroom, friend, brother and father... the terms are without number!<sup>60</sup>

In sum, the above are the contextual terms in which the New Theologian describes his personal conversion and the mystical cognition derived from it. He uses a rich array of words

such as θεωρία (contemplation), αἴσθησις (perception), πείρα (experience), ὄρασις (vision), ἔλλαμψις (flashing, illumination), ἄνωθεν γέννησις (new birth, cf. Jn 3:3), ἀνάστασις ψυχῆς (resurrection of soul), καινὴ κτίσις (new creation), and many others. He writes: “These, then, are the divine mysteries of Christians. This is the hidden power of our faith (ἡ ἐγκεκρυμμένη τῆς πίστεως ἡμῶν δύναμις) which unbelievers, or those who believe with difficulty, or rather believe in part, do not see nor are able at all to see.”<sup>61</sup> He repeats the same theme in diverse ways and images, but the grand message remains the same. One might compare his case with that of the Evangelist John who expounds the same message about Christ in various contexts, language and images as Jesus meets with Nicodemus, the Samaritan woman, the paralytic, the man born blind and the crowds. Christ himself is the Way, the Truth, the Life and the Light. The same powerful message resounds again and again in all of St. Symeon’s writings.

It is not our place, we may repeat, to analyze or evaluate the nature *per se* of St. Symeon’s mystical experience. However, it becomes quite clear that the mystical cognition identified with it is neither a specific exegetical method, nor some esoteric interpretation of the Bible. Rather, it has to do with the receptivity of faith, a spiritual sensibility of soul, an awareness of God’s transforming presence, a sense of freedom and renewal, accompanied by an enormous awe and wonder, as well as the conviction that the “mysteries” (μυστήρια) of which the Bible speaks are facts and realities, not mere words and concepts. Again, one may compare the case, as St. Symeon often does, with Jesus’ message to those who “seeing they do not see, and hearing they do not hear” (Mt 13:13).<sup>62</sup> The incomprehensibility of Jesus’ message about the kingdom lay essentially not in the lack of clarity or mental understanding of the stories and parables as heard by hearers, but in their lack of openness of heart to the



immediate, powerful reality of the kingdom breaking into people's lives just as Jesus spoke and acted! No faith was stirred and no light came on – nothing clicked! Jesus full of grace and truth spoke, but they did not get it! Similarly, St. Symeon's whole point is that the Scriptures speak quite clearly about the gospel, Christ, the Spirit, the new creation, love and joy, and so on, but the "majority"<sup>63</sup> of Jesus' hearers, just as in the case of Symeon's contemporaries, refused to listen and believe, to repent and be forgiven, to be cleansed and illuminated, in order to experience firsthand the marvel of these mysteries of the Kingdom and the Bible open to all. Naturally, such transforming experiences would radically rearrange a person's priorities, including one's scholarship, and enliven one's sensitivities to the centrality of Christ and the gospel within the whole story of salvation and the life of the Church. However, this powerful witness of the New Theologian diminishes neither the authority of the Bible, nor the discipline of serious study, nor the responsibility to communicate with others on the basis of reasonable discourse through responsible scholarship. What it does emphasize is that theological and biblical study must be accompanied by a serious life of faith and practice, beginning not the least with an examination and reordering of one's life priorities.<sup>64</sup>

#### A HERMENEUTICAL PARADIGM FOR DISCUSSION

What implications can be drawn from the above concerning the discussion about contemporary Orthodox hermeneutics? As has been noted, most Orthodox theologians and biblical scholars have given public approval of international biblical scholarship. Yet, clearly, a great deal of unease has been expressed about the spiritual dryness, even theological emptiness, of international biblical scholarship by an increasing number of theologians and scholars from all Christian traditions. Much of this is due to the radicalism

of revisionist biblical scholars, such as those involved in the Jesus Seminar, with little commitment to the authority of the Bible, the proclamation of the gospel, and the good estate of the Church. But dissatisfaction also arises from the perceived lack of sufficient spiritual and theological harvests derived from biblical scholarship, and useful for the Church, in an age searching and thirsting for authentic spirituality. Even attempts to popularize the fruits of biblical scholarship, with rare exceptions, seem to breathe the same scholarly spirit and to fall short of the desired impact. To be fair, it must also be said that the works of systematic theologians have not been any more successful in ministering to the pastoral and spiritual needs of God's people.

In my humble judgment, the chief challenge in biblical hermeneutics lies not in speculative theories of knowledge, whether philosophical, literary, or sociological, but rather in the task of how to balance appropriately scholarship, normative theological teaching, and devotional or spiritual reading of the Bible. On these matters I have expressed myself more fully elsewhere.<sup>65</sup> Here, asking the indulgence of my readers, I merely rehearse a summary of my own position, with the acknowledgement that its particular elements need correction and further clarification. I am convinced that biblical study, and all study of the Christian tradition as a whole, involves three interrelated aspects or moves: historical, evaluative and applicatory. In biblical study, the historical part is properly called "exegesis," a word whose etymology defines the very task: to bring out of the biblical texts whatever is there, not to import into them what is not there ("eisegesis"). The task is accomplished best by contextual and grammatical interpretation with due attention to authorial purpose, coherence, and emphasis, as well as language, literary forms and types. The Antiochene and Cappadocian Fathers relied on this method especially during the great christological and trinitarian controversies

focused largely on biblical texts and based on the cogency of contextual interpretation. We call it a “historical” task, but its results are not only a matter of historical knowledge but also of religious convictions, theological truths, and spiritual insights at the level of the ancient authors. This level of research, requiring training and balanced judgment, becomes the foundation of Christian biblical and theological scholarship, involving both sympathy for the subject matter and mutual accountability on the part of those engaged in it. Certainly, the wealth of biblical knowledge available in lexica, commentaries and many good books on biblical theology testify to the value of historical biblical studies over many years.

The second move, involving evaluation of the exegetical results, is far more problematic because the weight of judgment is transferred from the scope of the biblical authors to that of the reader. An exegetical scholar may produce the most eloquent and accurate account of the Prophet Ezekiel’s or St. Paul’s life and thought in the context of their respective social and religious worlds. However, what aspects of those accounts, how, and why a reader may accept as authoritative, valuable, and even normative for his or her life depends on the reader’s own faith, willingness, worldview, context of life, and assumed presuppositions. It is at this level that most of us part company, including scholars who may either share or diverge in perspectives, depending on predilection, background, intellectual experiences and personal courage. At this level, which is properly the philosophically and theologically evaluative level, chaos prevails in contemporary Christian scholarship precisely because of group and individual preferences. And yet, Holy Scripture and the classic Christian tradition itself, give testimony of the possibility of convergences for those committed both to biblical and ecclesial authority. As far as Orthodox theologians and Orthodox biblical scholars are

concerned, the plumb line is the doctrinal teaching of the Church, derived not from a *magisterium* rooted in a single person, but from the life of the whole Church expressed through councils to be received by the whole people of God. This stricture necessarily stifles neither creativity nor the present work of the Spirit, because, as new situations arise, all Orthodox Christians have the responsibility of thinking through issues in both prayerful and cogent ways, always mindful of the doctrinal sense of the Church derived from Scripture and tradition, as well as the ongoing work of the Holy Spirit.

The third move, which is what most readers of the Bible do without much reflection to the first and second, is that of the application of biblical texts to their personal lives, the Church and the world. Here the primary operative element is the life of faith, prayer and obedience to the evangelical precepts – just as St. Symeon the New Theologian insisted. To disclose His personal presence and blessings, God requires neither biblical nor doctrinal erudition, but a longing and trusting heart willing to seek Him out and to serve Him. At this level of spiritual reading of the Bible, some Orthodox scholars seemed to have narrowed the window of effective applicability to, or put primary weight on, either notions of entire devotional patterns,<sup>66</sup> or the context of the liturgical use of Scripture.<sup>67</sup> It is not that these emphases are insignificant in the Orthodox tradition. However, to present them as the truly definitive Orthodox approach to the decisive apprehension of the biblical message is to ignore the large role of the catechetical and doctrinal use of Scripture among the Church Fathers, including St. Symeon. It seems to me one-sided to accentuate either the moments of devotional study or an abstract eucharistic vision as the most crucial elements of Orthodox hermeneutics. St. Symeon himself was highly aware of what his fellow monastics ceaselessly chanted and heard from the recitation of the Bible in worship services, yet

he was equally dissatisfied about their personal actualization of biblical teachings because of their slackness of will and spirit with regard to both worship and Scripture. Rather, his accents were placed on the whole horizon of living faith and life centered on Christ, particularly a deep love for Him, a consequent unflinching observance of Christ's precepts, as well as prayerfulness as essential elements of the spiritual comprehension of Scripture's message open to all.

To conclude, whether explicitly or implicitly, the works of St. Symeon, just as the rich biblical heritage of the Church Fathers as a whole, ultimately presuppose all three moves in the use and study of Holy Scripture – the exegetical, the doctrinal and the contemplative. What is required is the appropriate balance between them in terms of purpose, place and audience. None of these elements should be missing in any endeavor, whether engaged in an exegetical paper, a theological treatise, or a parish educational group. Yet the appropriate emphasis and balance must be dictated by context, whether classroom, scholarly guild, sermon, or Bible class. The ideal interpreter is one who seeks at once to enact the above three aspects or moves as one integrated person – scholar, theologian and saint.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> A sampling might include Richard John Neuhaus, ed., *Biblical Interpretation in Crisis: The Ratzinger Conference on Bible and Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1989); Carl E. Braaten and Robert W. Jenson, eds., *Reclaiming the Bible for the Church* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995); Brevard S. Childs, *Biblical Theology of the Old and New Testaments* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992); Gordon D. Fee, *Gospel and Spirit: Issues in New Testament Hermeneutics* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1991); M. Robert Mulholland, Jr., *Shaped by the Word: The Power of Scripture in Spiritual Formation* (Nashville: The Upper Room, 1985); Joseph A. Fitzmeyer, SJ, *Scripture, the Soul of Theology* (New York: Paulist Press, 1994); Donald G. Bloesch, *Holy Scripture: Revelation, Inspiration and Interpretation* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1994),

and T. F. Torrance, *Reality and Evangelical Theology: The Realism of Christian Revelation* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1982/1999).

<sup>2</sup> The most notable example is the enormous project, led by Thomas C. Oden, to gather the harvest of the entire patristic exegetical tradition in the series *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture*, covering both the Old and New Testaments, and currently being published by InterVarsity Press. See also, Christopher A. Hall, *Reading Scripture with the Church Fathers* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1998); Kenneth Tanner and Christopher A. Hall, *Ancient and Postmodern Christianity: Paleo-Orthodoxy in the 21st Century, Essays in Honor of Thomas C. Oden* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2002); Andrew Louth, *Discerning the Mystery: An Essay on the Nature of Theology* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1983); Theodore Stylianopoulos, *The New Testament: An Orthodox Perspective, Vol. 1, Scripture, Tradition, Hermeneutics* (Brookline, MA: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 1997), and John Breck, *The Power of the Word in the Worshiping Church* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1986) and most recently *Scripture in Tradition: The Bible and its Interpretation in the Orthodox Church* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Press, 2001).

<sup>3</sup> These have appeared in English translation as follows: C. J. deCatanzaro, *Symeon the New Theologian: The Discourses* (New York: Paulist Press, 1980); Paul McGuckin, *Symeon The New Theologian: the Practical and Theological Chapters and The Three Theological Discourses* (Kalamazoo: Cistercian Publications, 1982), and Alexander Golitzin, *St. Symeon the New Theologian on the Mystical Life: The Ethical Discourses, Vol. 1, The Church and the Last Things* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1995) and *St. Symeon the New Theologian on the Mystical Life: The Ethical Discourses, Vol. 2, On Virtue and Christian Life* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1996). Whenever deemed necessary, the original Greek has been consulted. For this paper, I have chosen not to engage St. Symeon's extensive poetical hymns and prayers, preferring to limit my labors to his expository works.

<sup>4</sup> For a review of his life and thought, see Alexander Golitzin, *St. Symeon the New Theologian on the Mystical Life: The Ethical Discourses, Vol. 3, Life, Times and Theology* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1997).

<sup>5</sup> *Catechetical Discourse 3.6/deCatanzaro*, p. 66, lines 226-34 (as in the original in *Sources Chrétiennes*).

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.8, pp. 67-68, lines 270-71 and 294-96.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 67, lines 279-89.

<sup>8</sup> I have found only a single instance where St. Symeon exercises a mild critique of Scripture but quickly backs away when he writes: "The divine Scriptures indicate that there are three places where the mind likes

to dwell. I would say myself that there are really two such places – not that I want to teach the contrary to Scripture, God forbid – but I do not count the middle position between the first and the last,” *The Practical and Theological Chapters* 1.78. See McGuckin, p. 55. This is an obscure passage which may signify the carnal, virtuous and spiritual levels of human existence according to McGuckin, or perhaps “psychic” (ψυχικός) for “virtuous,” to match Pauline terminology (1 Cor 2:14).

<sup>9</sup> The full title is cited above, n. 2.

<sup>10</sup> H. R. Percival, ed., *The Seven Ecumenical Councils in The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, Vol. 14* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1991), pp. 374-75.

<sup>11</sup> A key biblical passage quoted by St. Symeon in many places places, e.g., *Catechetical Discourse* 3.8/deCatanzaro, p. 67, and *Catechetical Discourse* 28. 1/deCatanzaro, p. 295, as well as *First Ethical Discourse* 12/Golitzin, Vol. 1, p. 63.

<sup>12</sup> *Twelfth Ethical Discourse*/Golitzin, Vol. 2, p. 155.

<sup>13</sup> *Thirteen Ethical Discourse*/Golitzin, Vol. 2, p. 164.

<sup>14</sup> *Catechetical Discourse* 12.8/deCatanzaro, p. 179, lines 243-44.

<sup>15</sup> *Third Ethical Discourse*/Golitzin, Vol. 1, pp. 129-30.

<sup>16</sup> *Fifth Ethical Discourse*/Golitzin, Vol. 2, p. 61.

<sup>17</sup> St. Symeon in many places fulminates against those who oppose his teaching concerning the reality of the apostolic life, the new creation, the indwelling of Christ and the Spirit, indeed a second Baptism of the Spirit for repentant adults in every generation. He refers to his opponents’ position as “blasphemy against the Holy Spirit” and “the worst of all heresies” because it undermines the incarnation, Christ’s saving work, the gift of the Spirit, as well as the authority of the Bible. See, for example, *Catechetical Discourse* 29/deCatanzaro, pp. 308-17. Then, at least in one instance, he backs away from the radical charge of heresy, calling it rather “impiety” (ἀσέβειά ἐστι μᾶλλον ἢ αἵρεσις), *Catechetical Discourse* 32.2/deCatanzaro, p. 336, lines 47-48. However, to question the reality of Christ’s work in the way St. Symeon perceives it to be questioned by his opponents is to question the truth of the gospel, and that certainly belongs to the realm of heresy, unless one holds to a merely abstract understanding of dogma.

<sup>18</sup> For those interested in the topic, the present writer offers a review of Fr. Breck’s new work with same title (see n. 2 above), a review due to appear in the *St. Vladimir’s Theological Quarterly* during 2004.

<sup>19</sup> Stylianopoulos, *The New Testament*, pp. 47-61 and 207-214. See n. 2 above for the full title.

<sup>20</sup> Thomas Hopko, *The Bible in the Orthodox Church*, pp. 66-67.

<sup>21</sup> Apart from occasional expressions of regret about ignorance of the Scriptures in our times.

<sup>22</sup> It goes without saying that such a task can be appropriately accomplished in a cooperative way, with the freedom of Orthodox theologians and biblical scholars to discuss matters and critique each other's positions with a sense of mutual respect and freedom of the Spirit.

<sup>23</sup> Breck, *Scripture in Tradition*, x-xi.

<sup>24</sup> For a review of these issues in Orthodox scholarship, and for bibliography, see Stylianopoulos, *The New Testament*, pp. 71-77 and 162-85.

<sup>25</sup> *Catechetical Discourse* 9.2/deCatanzaro, p. 151, lines 36-49. In *Ethical Discourse* 1.6/Golitzin, Vol. 1, p. 43, he builds a long allegorical interpretation on the image of Christ's body – hands, shoulders, breast, belly, thighs, legs, and feet – as representing various virtues given to Christians to function as the body of Christ. Elsewhere in the same discourse (1.1 1/Golitzin, p. 61) the oxen and fatted calves mentioned in the Parable of the Banquet (Mt 24:4-6) mean nothing else than "the virgin's Son, the calf who is 'fatted' with divinity;" and, again in 1.1 2/Golitzin, p. 67, "the thick darkness under his feet" (Ps 18:9) is "the flesh of the Lord" whose shoelaces John the Baptist was unworthy to untie.

<sup>26</sup> *Ethical Discourse* 1.1/Golitzin, Vol. 1, p. 24.

<sup>27</sup> In one instance he writes: "We do not arrive at this meaning through forced reasoning," *Ethical Discourse* 1.6/Golitzin, Vol. 1, p. 48. See also n. 8 above for St. Symeon's mild disagreement with a scriptural teaching.

<sup>28</sup> See, for example, *Catechetical Discourse* 35.3/deCatanzaro, pp. 360-61, and *Catechetical Discourse* 34.9-10/deCatanzaro, pp. 354-55, where he speaks about his "labor and toil" to "dig and excavate" the treasure to be found in Holy Scripture.

<sup>29</sup> Apart from his ever-present focus on the new creation, see, for example, his biblical expositions on the pastoral ministry which he views primarily as a teaching ministry, *Ethical Discourse* 1 1/Golitzin, Vol. 2, pp. 139-53, and his homiletical pieces on the texts of Eph 5:16 and 1 Cor 15:47 in Golitzin, Vol. 2, pp. 155ff. and 163ff. respectively.

<sup>30</sup> See especially *The Three Theological Discourses*/McGuckin, pp. 107-40, and *Ethical Discourses* 1 and 2/Golitzin, Vol. 1, pp. 50-75 and 83ff.

<sup>31</sup> *Ethical Discourse* 1.1 O/Golitzin, Vol. 1, pp. 57-58.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 1:12/Golitzin, Vol. 1, pp. 63-64.

<sup>33</sup> *Catechetical Discourse* 34.12/deCatanzaro, p. 357.

<sup>34</sup> *Eleventh Ethical Discourse*/Golitzin, Vol. 2, p. 147.

<sup>35</sup> The eloquent and stirring message in St. Symeon's *First Catechetical Discourse*/deCatanzaro, pp. 41-46, "On Charity."

<sup>36</sup> *Catechetical Discourse* 28:1 /deCatanzaro, p. 295.

<sup>37</sup> *Catechetical Discourse* 29.2/deCatanzaro, p. 311.



<sup>38</sup> See *The First Theological Discourse*/McGuckin, especially pp. 107-13 and 116-17.

<sup>39</sup> See deCatanzaro, pp. 261-66.

<sup>40</sup> I owe the phraseology and the idea to Andrew Louth, *Discerning the Mystery: An Essay on the Nature of Theology* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1983), pp. 69-71.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 69.

<sup>42</sup> For an insightful piece on this subject, see James Price, "Mystical Transformation of Consciousness in St. Symeon," *Diakonia* 19 (1-3, 1984-85), pp. 6-16.

<sup>43</sup> See especially *Catechetical Discourses* 32 and 34.

<sup>44</sup> *Catechetical Discourse* 34.5/deCatanzaro, pp. 350-51 and lines 129, 133-34, 141-42 and 154-56.

<sup>45</sup> *Practical and Theological Chapters* 3.4/McGuckin, p. 73.

<sup>46</sup> See especially *Catechetical Discourse* 16.2/deCatanzaro, p. 200, lines 67-78. In 6.7/deCatanzaro, p. 126 and lines 265-67, he writes: "Just as a father freely gives his son a share [of his estate], so he bestowed on me his unworthy servant, freely, without effort on my part, the Holy Spirit."

<sup>47</sup> John Romanides, "Critical Examination of the Applications of Theology," *Procès-Verbaux du deuxième Congrès de Théologie Orthodoxe*, ed. by Savas Agouridis (Athens, 1978), pp. 413-41.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 432.

<sup>49</sup> See *Catechetical Discourses* 15.2/deCatanzaro, p. 194, line 58; 24.5/deCatanzaro, p. 265, lines 172-74; and 32.5/deCatanzaro, p. 338, lines 110-15.

<sup>50</sup> *Catechetical Discourse* 34.6/deCatanzaro, p. 352 and lines 174-76.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, 34.9/deCatanzaro, p. 354, lines 245-48.

<sup>52</sup> See *Catechetical Discourse* 35.1/deCatanzaro p. 359, lines 11-12; and the *Third Theological Discourse*/McGuckin, pp. 126-28.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, lines 255-57.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, lines 263-65.

<sup>55</sup> A valuable recent review of their theology, biblical orientation and hermeneutical perspective is by Christopher A. Hall, *Reading Scripture with the Church Fathers*, pp. 56-101.

<sup>56</sup> 35.3/deCatanzaro, p. 360, line 50.

<sup>57</sup> 35.6/deCatanzaro, p. 361, lines 129-39, where up to eight or nine steps of spiritual transformation may be counted.

<sup>58</sup> 35.7-8/deCatanzaro, pp. 363-65, lines 140-54, 179-81 and 190.

<sup>59</sup> 35.9/deCatanzaro, p. 365, especially lines 205ff.

<sup>60</sup> 35.9-10/deCatanzaro, pp. 365-66, especially lines 205ff. and 225ff.

<sup>61</sup> *Catechetical Discourse* 13.5/deCatanzaro, p. 184, lines 124-27.

<sup>62</sup> *Catechetical Discourse* 32.1/deCatanzaro, p. 336, line 29.

<sup>63</sup> Although he addresses himself to all who would listen, St. Symeon concedes, at least at one point, that the majority of Christians cannot reach his own radical vision of Christian life: "While I agree myself that many things are impossible for the majority, I am saying this in particular for those of my order [i.e., the monastics] who are lazy and do not choose to despise the world ..." *Fourth Ethical Discourse*/Golitzin, p. 38.

<sup>64</sup> *Catechetical Discourse* 22 is a phenomenal statement of how a Christian can begin with a simple faith, resolute repentance, vigilant Christian living and a disciplined life of prayer in order to be led by God to the most sublime experience of vibrant faith and communion with Him in the uncreated divine light.

<sup>65</sup> Stylianopoulos, *The New Testament*, especially Chapters 6 and 7.

<sup>66</sup> For example, John Breck in *Scripture in Tradition*, Chapter 4 entitled "In Quest of an Orthodox *Lectio Divina*," pp. 67-86, including notions of "*sensus plenior*." Compare a more cautious approach to contemplative reading of the Bible by Bradley Nassif, "Antiochene θεωρία in St. John Chrysostom's Exegesis," in *Ancient and Postmodern Christianity: Essays in Honor of Thomas C. Oden*, ed., Kenneth Tanner and Christopher A. Hall (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2002), pp. 48-67, where the author concedes that "under the rubric of θεωρία Chrysostom occasionally lapses into incredulous allegorical interpretations," p. 53.

<sup>67</sup> See Σάββας' Αγουρίδης, *Ερμηνευτική τῶν ἱερῶν κειμένων* (ΑΡΤΟΣ ΖΩΗΣ, ΑΘΗΝΑ, 2000), pp. 79-95. See also the emphasis on the "eucharistic vision" by Petros Vassiliadis, in *Lex Orandi: Μελέτες λειτουργικής θεολογίας* (Θεσσαλονίκη, 1994); *Eucharist and Witness: Orthodox Perspectives on the Unity and Mission of the Church* (Geneva: WCC, 1998), and his article "Holiness in the Perspective of Eucharistic Ecclesiology" in *Orthodox and Wesleyan Spirituality*, ed., S. T. Kimbrough, Jr. (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2002), pp. 101-16. So also John Breck in *The Power of the Word in the Worshipping Church* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1986).

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**Chryssavgis, John, *In the Heart of the Desert: The Spirituality of the Desert Fathers and Mothers*, The Treasures of the World's Religions Series, Bloomington, IN: World Wisdom, 2003, pp. ix +163, ISBN 0-941532-51-8.**

With this latest work, Fr. John Chryssavgis opens a door for his readers: the door to a better insight into the minds and hearts of the desert fathers and mothers. As modern readers, we are at a distinct disadvantage when trying to make sense and understand the milieu of the early monastics of the Church. Fr. John sets out a blueprint so that his readers have a better understanding of the language, sensibilities and theological thinking of the desert. The organization of this book illustrates the thoughts and themes so familiar to the desert dwellers, yet so remote for us. The author quotes sayings from the desert hermits, many of which are familiar to our ears; and then he delves more deeply into the context and perception from the viewpoint of the fourth century. The outcome is a foundation for us, the readers of today, not only to conceptualize the belief system, but also to apply these concepts to our understanding and our spiritual life.

As the explanations and examples develop, the reader begins to comprehend the mindset and the basis for the advice from far-flung corners of the desert. By analyzing the depth of the spiritual counsel and the language used by the abbas and ammas, Fr. Chryssavgis allows us to probe and clarify these voices who speak so compellingly today. The value of his "quote and explain" approach becomes not only didactic, but also assists us as readers to extend the explanations to other less familiar but equally valuable sayings. This study also helps us to begin to order other apophthegmata and to distill their meanings.

In addition to a better grasp of the language and the intent of these early spiritual guides, we are given a glimpse into their personalities and their backgrounds. Names like Anthony, Arsinius, Poeman and Syncletia may be known to us, but through this work, they take on flesh and begin to speak directly to our hearts across the centuries. They whisper from a distance and the remoteness of the desert to our age of material attachment and loneliness. Even the casual or first-time reader will benefit from the knowledge and method that the author adopts. His grasp of the epoch and the nuances of the desert truly transport us to this foundational era of early monasticism.

Even though our present-day lifestyle is vastly different from that of the early desert dwellers, it is evident that human nature is timeless and our spiritual struggles are reflective of the challenges faced and overcome by the mothers and fathers of the wilderness. In his introduction, Fr. John states his intention to explore the desert by allowing a conversation between his readers and the voices from the desert. The remarkable aspect of the work is that he does follow and accomplish this goal.

Footnotes at the bottom of each page aid the reader in comprehension of the salient points of the work. Other helpful features include the illustrations/photographs, which set a tone for an understanding of the desert environment that shaped these sages of the past. Another most useful addendum is the chronological table that allows readers to organize their thinking and place the different fathers and mothers as contemporaries and fellow travelers along the spiritual path. The short illustrations, which Chryssavgis uses to accent and punctuate his treatment of a topic, wake up the reader to the current application of a saying.

...that we tend to be impatient; we tend to wander; we tend to interfere with the process. And so, we are tempted to speak; we break the deafening silence. Words are ways of affirming

our existence, of justifying our actions. We speak in order to excuse ourselves, within ourselves and before others; whereas silence is a way of dying – within ourselves and in the presence of others. It is a way of surrendering life, always in the context and in the hope of new life and resurrection.

This example allows us to contextualize the very short saying by Abba Alonius: “If I had not destroyed myself completely, I would not have been able to rebuild and reshape myself again.” After quoting this saying, Fr. Chryssavgis continues his explanation of guilt and how this applies to each and every Christian life. Ultimately, pride is the failing to which Abba Alonius is referring, and Fr. Chryssavgis allows us as readers to recognize our own failings in the short confession of the desert-dweller.

After the exercises of understanding that Fr. Chryssavgis guides the reader to develop, there are the concluding chapters that summarize the entire work. “The *Reflections* of Abba Zosimas” appears for the first time in English translation. Fr. Chryssavgis’ fluid translation brings the work alive for the contemporary reader. The preparation, which was accomplished by the earlier chapters, steers us through the reading of this fifth- and sixth-century work. The humanity of this father of desert and his struggle to acquire spiritual perfection becomes real and touches our hearts and souls. The sensitivity, which was formed by the preceding chapters, helps us to grasp both the perspective and spiritual labor of this saint.

Overall, it is this reviewer’s opinion that this book can be an excellent introduction to the ways of the fathers of the desert. As we attempt to understand our spiritual heritage, we need tools that clarify and guide us as we begin our reading. Once we are more comfortable with the language and the idiom of the desert fathers and mothers, we can then more confidently continue our searching in depth. Fr. John Chryssavgis’ book *In the Heart of the Desert* is one such work.

George P. Bithos

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<sup>12</sup> For reminiscences on the interchanges between J. Raasted and Gr. Th. Stathis see “‘*To onoma sou hoti kalon*,’ †Jörgen Raasted” in *Theologia* 67 (1996), t. 3, pp. 530-549 and in the volume in honor of Gr. Th. Stathis, *Time pros ton didaskalon* (Athens: *Anatoles to Periechema*, 2001), 69ff. and 282-283.

<sup>13</sup> The paper was presented at the 1991 Byzantine Congress in Moscow and remains unpublished, according to the author.

<sup>14</sup> K. Levy, “On Gregorian Orality,” *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 43 (1990), 185-227.

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**Matthew Kamariotes. *Kanones eis ten Metamorphosin. Eisagoge, ekdose keimenou hypo Demetriou K Chatzemichael, Didaktoros Philologias*.** Hagion Oros: Hiera Mone Pantokratoros, 2002. [Matthew Kamariotes. *Canons to the Transfiguration. Introduction, publication of text by Demetrios K Chatzemichael, doctor of philology. Mount Athos: Sacred Monastery of Pentrokrator, 2002.*] pp. 89 + vii. Dedicated to the late abbot Geron Bessarion; Prologue by Hygoumen Gabriel; addendum with 3 photos from Pantokrator MSS 284, 285 and 308; ornaments used throughout publication are also lifted from Pantokrator MSS 284 and 285.

On any given day in the Orthodox monasteries scattered throughout the world, but especially those historic monasteries found in traditionally Orthodox lands and the Holy Mount of Athos itself, as many as five or six canons can be read or chanted during the normal daily offices of prayer. This is because canons are not only chanted in the orthros, but are also used in the vespers and even at times in the mesonyktikon or midnight service. Add the supplicatory canon said before table in the morning and it is not hard to see how this number is reached and often surpassed. From monastery to monastery, of course, the number and types of canons chanted are indicated by the rubrics in its *typikon*, a book regulating the hymns, prayers, services and, in a word, *taxis* used throughout the year. The fundamental *typikon* for all



monastic typika, and today even urban and parish taxis, is the typikon of the Great Lavra of Hosios Sabas, Mar Saba<sup>1</sup>. In chapter seven of this typikon we read:

Note regarding the services on Saturdays throughout the year when there is also the commemoration of a saint.

...The reading and the 50th [Psalm]. First the canon of the menaeon. [The canon] of the monastery, in the mode [of the week], and the nekrosimon [canon of the dead]...<sup>2</sup>

This use of the canons 'of the monastery' each Saturday in the orthros is still followed in many monasteries through the Orthodox world, as well as in the monasteries of the Monastic Republic of Athos. This practice is also the reason why many monasteries have collections of canons to the saint or feast to which each was established or dedicated in all eight of the musical modes. In this way a monastery canon can be used each week at the Saturday orthros in the mode of the week and the diataxis of the typikon be fulfilled.

This small but artistically laid out publication by the monastery of Pantokrator on the Holy Mountain under review is adorned by the reproduction of an illumination icon of the Transfiguration of our Savior lifted from an *Apandachousa* epistle from the abbot Chrysanthos of the same monastery, written in the year 1744. A quote from a homily by another past abbot, Geron Bessarion (abbot from the year 1992), who reposed in the Lord only last year (2001) as well as the present abbot Archim. Gabriel's Prologue point to the towering position held by the event of the divine Transfiguration of our Lord in Orthodox theology, the way of life of every Orthodox Christian, but "especially in the life of the monk, who is raised to a high mount by the transfigured Christ" (p. 7). The intense experience of the Lord's Transfiguration in the life of those struggling at the Monastery of Pantokrator on Athos is because the community established in the year 1357 is dedicated to the same event.

The publication of the never-before-published canons to the Transfiguration composed by Matthaïos Kamariotes was coordinated by Demetrios K. Chatzemichael, doctor of philology. His sixteen-page Introduction gives a clear and concise overview of Matthaïos' life and work. Born in Constantinople during the second decade of the 15th century, Matthaïos Kamariotes was a pupil of Georgios, later Gennadeios Scholarios, the first Patriarch of Constantinople after the Fall.<sup>3</sup> In addition, the reader will find plenty of information in this short Introduction regarding (1) the manuscript tradition of the canons, where an explanation is given for the additional two canons in modes IV and IV plagal by a certain Gabriel who lived in the 15th century. The reason for the two additional canons is that Matthaïos did not compose canons in modes IV and plagal IV since these are the modes used by the canons of the feast itself (celebrated 6 August).<sup>4</sup> (2) The section on the manuscript legacy's relationship with the Pantokrator Monastery touches on the fact that the canons seem to have been continually used and possibly even composed specifically for Pantokrator since their composition. (3) A final section deals with the analysis of the structure and form followed by the canons, as well as the hymnographic and theological content in the texts themselves. Here, the emphasis is that Matthaïos' canons are ecclesiastical in character, devoid of flowery narrations, squarely based on the New and Old Testament sources and Patristic homilies on the feast. Also noted is the detection of an anti-heretical tendency in Matthaïos' six canons, no doubt due to the hesychastic controversy prevalent in his time.

The main and largest portion of the publication is the critical publication of the eight canons to the Lord's Transfiguration. Matthaïos' six canons are followed by those composed by Gabriel. They are attractively and practically printed in large letters with epititla taken from two main manuscript sources, Pantokrator manuscript nos. 284 and 285. The publication

ends with an addendum containing photos of the first folios where the canons appear in Pantokrator manuscripts nos. 284, 285 and 308.

Whether the reader is an aspiring hymnographer, student of Orthodox Byzantine or post-Byzantine hymnography and theology, or simply someone looking to hymnodize the Triune God with the canons published here, this publication is a superb opportunity to ascend Mount Tabor with our Lord, Peter, James and John and experience the divine luminosity "of the heart purified, the intellect illumined and the soul radiant, all faculties, senses and actions purified" (p. 5).

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Fr. Constantine Terss

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Founded around 483, the site of St. Sabas' monastic community near Jerusalem was in the Judean desert and became a strong prototype for Eastern Orthodox monasticism as well as worship through its liturgical typikon. Cf. Papadopoulos 1921; Phokylides 1927; Chitty 1966; MacCoull 1991; Skythopolis 1991. The progression of this liturgical typikon from monastic Egypt, Palestine and Capadocia on to Constantinople for the neo-Sabaitic and Studite synthesis is the subject of much ongoing scholarly research. For excellent summaries of this progression in English and bibliographies, see Mateos 1967; Taft 1986, 1988, 1992; Thomas, Constantinides et al. 2000.

<sup>2</sup> Hosiou Saba, *Typikon syn Theo hagio periechon pasan ten diataxin tes ekklesiastikes akolouthias tou chronou holou* (En tais kleinais Benetiais: Typothēn para Ioanne Petro to Pinello analomasi tois autou, para de Theophylaktou Hieromonachou tou Tzanphourmarou, epimelos diorthothēn, 1643) folio h<sup>v</sup>. Cf. Saba Nanakou, *Ho hagios hieromartyr Serapheim* (ekdosis iv, Thessalonike, 1978) 107-8: "Rule regarding the service for Saturdays throughout the entire year," where the pilgrimage of the abbot of the Monastery of Kryare Brysis's in the year 1790 to Mount Athos is described and the story of how, after witnessing the use of the canon of the monastery in the mode of the week there, he returned to his own monastery and commissioned the creation of a set of canons in the eight modes for use on Saturday mornings in his own monastery is described.

<sup>3</sup> While various treatises by Matthaïos Kamariotes are known, see Kamariota and Reimarus 1721.

<sup>4</sup> These canons used today for the feast of the Transfiguration are found in the liturgical hymn book known as the Menaeon. The first canon in mode IV is by Kosmas Monachos and the second, in mode IV plagal, is by John of Damascus. For English translations of these canons, see Mary and Ware 1969.

\* \* \*

***Theoria kai Praxe tes Psaltikes Technes: Praktika A' Panelleniou synedriou psaltikes technes (Athena, 3-5 no-embriou 2000)***; Proceedings from the First Pan-Hellenic Conference, "Theoria and Praxis of the Psaltic Art" (Athens, 3-5 November 2000).

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## **Messianism in the Book of Hosea in the Light of Patristic Interpretations<sup>1</sup>**

EUGEN J. PENTIUC

### **A. STATUS QUESTIONIS**

With respect to the interpretative models used in search of the Hoseanic messianism, Maly<sup>2</sup> points to the covenant between Yahweh and Israel, "covenant that gave birth both to the people of God and to its aspirations for the future." Described in conjugal terms as a union between prophet and Gomer, this covenant lies at the heart of Hosea's message. Thus, those exegetes who attribute the messianic prophecies to a later editor of the book ignore the close relationship between these prophecies and the basic idea of covenant; without the marriage-like covenant there would be no book of Hosea at all, concludes Maly. He also noted that, if in the later prophets the eschatological hope is centered on the Davidic dynasty, in Hosea, the only northern-Israelite prophet whose writing is part of the Old Testament canon, the messianic prophecies must be read against the background of impending doom brought by Tiglath-pileser III's campaigns. But Maly hesitates to say that Hosea's contribution to the developing Messianism in 2:1-3; 3:4-5, the so-called "royal messianism," could have been added by a southern author after the fall of Samaria as a reflection of Isaiah's king ideology. Conversely, he argues that Hosea's messianism represents the embryo of the future prophecies found in the two great prophets of Judah, Isaiah and Micah. Maly considers messianic prophecies the following Hoseanic texts: 2:1-3; 2:16-25; 3:4-5; 6:1-3; 11; and 14:5-9.

On the other hand, Kaiser Jr.<sup>3</sup> insists that the messianic sayings (limited to those which portray Messiah as a king, i.e., 3:4-5 and 2:2) are deeply rooted in the notion of kingship. Yet, as Maly shows, the failure of the monarchy rather than its sporadic successes spurned the rise of the “royal messianism.” Israel’s kings have failed to preserve the unity between North and South as well as people’s communion with God, so that Messiah, the king in the line of David, will come to compensate for their shortcomings.

## B. MESSIANIC PROPHECIES

Below are listed the most representative Patristic passages pertaining to the Hoseanic messianism. The biblical texts along with their interpretations are listed under six headings which try to reconstruct the image of Messiah as rediscovered by the ancient Christian writers in the book Hosea. A few conclusions on the Patristic methods of exegesis will end up this presentation.

### 1. *Types of Messiah*

The ancient Christian interpreters discern several types of Messiah.

#### (a) God’s Face

5:15: *I will go back to my place until they bear punishment<sup>4</sup> and seek my face. In their distress, they will seek me early.*<sup>5</sup>

Cyril<sup>6</sup> sees in God’s face a prefiguration of Christ, the ‘image’ of God the Father: “It seems that the saying refers very suitably to the mystery of Christ, and the redemption through him, pointing to the conversion to God. For God’s sought face signifies most certainly the Son himself “who is the image, and the radiance, and the very stamp of the Father’s na-

ture" [Heb 1:3]. Thus, the true face of God and Father is the Son, inasmuch as he is recognized in him, "and who saw him, saw the Father" [Jn 14:9]. The divine cantor thus calls him, when he cries out to God of all, saying: "Cause your face to shine upon your servant" [Ps 118:135]. Indeed, just as from the person of those who believed, and were already transformed according to the Son through the Spirit: "The light of your face, O Lord, has been marked upon us" [Ps 4:6]. Or as the prophet says: "The light of our face, the anointed Lord (Χριστὸς Κύριος)" [Lam 4:20].

(b) King David

*3:5: Afterward the children of Israel shall return and seek Yahweh their God, and David their king, and turn trembling<sup>7</sup> to Yahweh and his goodness in the latter days.*

The object of the "seeking" in 3:5 is twofold, "Yahweh their God and David their king." The second object does not indicate the Davidic monarchy (in this case we should have the "house of David") but David as a type of Messiah the King (cf. Jer 30:9; Ezek 34:23, 24). That this text is a messianic prophecy is supported by the juxtaposition of David and Yahweh.<sup>8</sup> St. Cyril of Alexandria<sup>9</sup> shows that at some time Israel, once rejected, "will be called, and by faith she will return and know the God of all and David, the one who is from the seed of David, Christ according to flesh, the Lord and the King of all."

Differently, Theodoret of Cyrus<sup>10</sup> sees in "David their king" an allusion to the "prince Zerubabel come to light from the Davidic tribe, in the presence of whom they [the Israelites] received the fruition (ἀπόλαυσις) of the good gifts of God," namely the liberation from the Babylonian captivity.

For Jerome,<sup>11</sup> "David" refers both to Zerubabel and to Christ, who is of Davidic origin.



## (c) The Angel of the Lord

*12:3: In the womb he deceived his brother, and in his manhood<sup>12</sup> he wrestled with God.*

Cyril<sup>13</sup> interprets: “Thus, the mystery about Christ was predicted [προανεδείκνυτο] by the wrestling [πάλης] with the angel. For those from Jacob have continued to struggle [ἀνταγωνίζεσθαι] against Christ, the one whom the word of the prophets has called ‘angel of great counsel’ [Isa 9:5: LXX: Μεγάλης βουλῆς ἄγγελος MT: רַחֵם נִזְבֵּן “Wonder-Counselor”]. Indeed, some will grow numb by not accepting the redemption [λύτρωσιν] (effected) by him, others would not confess that they have seen through him and in him, face to face, the One in nature and true God. For in himself Emmanuel has showed us the Father: ‘Anyone who saw me saw the Father’ [Jn 14:9]. Therefore, the mystery was prefigured by the way of a contest (ἀθλήσεω).”

## 2. Incarnation

*1:4: And Yahweh said to him:<sup>14</sup>  
‘Call his name Jezreel!’<sup>15</sup>*

Here, as in the case of Isaiah’s son Maher-shalal-hash-baz (8:3), the word of God comes to dwell in Hosea’s son Jezreel, as a living sign up to its fulfillment. This temporary ‘dwelling’ in a flesh-and-bone human being was viewed as a type of the Incarnation of the Logos by Cyril<sup>16</sup> and Jerome.<sup>17</sup> Having translated “Jezreel” as “the seed of God” (σπορά Θεοῦ), Cyril goes on, “From her [i. e. “the synagogue of the Judeans”] was born the first-born (πρωτότοκον), Christ, who is truly the seed of God, who became flesh.” On the other hand, Jerome remarks that “Jezreel” is “a type of the seed of God (*seminis Dei*) and the revenge of his blood refers to the Passion of the Lord.”

*9:12: Even if they bring up children,  
I will bereave them to the last man. Indeed, woe to them  
also when I turn away from them!*<sup>18</sup>

Theodoret<sup>19</sup> explains: “Since my flesh [cf. LXX: σάρξ μου], I will receive (ἀναλήψομαι), is of them, I will not leave them completely alone, until I receive it and separate those who obeyed the calling.”

Theophilact<sup>20</sup> writes: “Seemingly, this is said about the Only-begotten [Son]. For after he says that ‘they will be left without children,’ he adds, that ‘I will not exterminate (ἐξολοθρεύσω) them utterly, for my flesh, I will receive, is of them.’”

### 3. Return from Egypt

*11:1: When*<sup>21</sup> *Israel was young, I loved him;  
out*<sup>22</sup> *of Egypt I called my son.*<sup>23</sup>

Jerome<sup>24</sup> interprets: “Instead of ‘Out of Egypt have I called my son,’ the Septuagint renders ‘Out of Egypt have I called his sons.’ Surely, Matthew [2:15: ἐξ Αἰγύπτου ἐκάλεσα τὸν υἱόν μου] is in agreement with the *Hebraica veritas*. Thus, those who remove our interpretation abandon the scripture from which the Evangelist took this testimony and interpreted it with respect to the Savior when he was brought back from Egypt to the land of Israel.” Jerome mentions that Matthew first produced the Gospel in “Hebrew letters” (*Hebraeis litteris*).<sup>25</sup>

Theophilact<sup>26</sup> explains: “But Christ is the so-called Israel. (For this has seen God. ‘For no one has seen the Father except the one who is from God’ [Jn 1:18].) Thus, he was a not yet speaking child (νήπιος) and out of Egypt has the Father called (ἐκάλεσεν) him, the truly beloved (ἀγαπητόν) one.”

Julian<sup>27</sup> indicates that: “The apostolic authority [i.e. Mt 2:15] supports the transition from the people to the person of the Lord Jesus Christ.”

#### 4. *Conspiracy against Messiah*

7:3: *By their wickedness they gladden a king, and by their lies officials.*

Perhaps “king” (מֶלֶךְ) mentioned here refers to Pekah who rose to power by assassinating king Pekahiah in his palace in Samaria, 736 B.C. (2 Kgs 15:25). For Jerome<sup>28</sup> this line deals with king Jeroboam I and his court. Hosea uses “king” without definite article to underscore the fact that Pekah was just a number in a series of king-assassins in the final days of the northern Kingdom. “Wickedness” (רָעָה) and “lies” (שָׁרָה) describe the hypocrisy of Pekahiah’s subjects who, after they had conspired against their own king, flattered the usurper Pekah and his court.

Cyril<sup>29</sup> writes: “The saying truly refers to those who crucified Emmanuel. For while lying and calumniating him, they gladdened Herod and Pontius Pilate, and the leaders of the Synagogue. For the divine Peter says to God and Father of all: ‘For truly in this city there were gathered together against your holy child Jesus, whom you did anoint, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel’ [Acts 4:27]. And further Cyril explains: “The Judaeans have done to Christ in the same way. For speaking falsely against his glory, and gradually drawing the multitudes away from his love, the scribes and Pharisees played the whore in a spiritual way (νοητῶς), removing from him the whole herd.”

Theophilact<sup>30</sup> interprets: “And the disciple Judas stretched his hand, when he received the silver for handing [him] over, agreeing with the plagues (λοιμῶν) of the Pharisees and scribes, when they were excited to lie in wait in order to tear in pieces and apprehend the Lord.”

### 5. Resurrection and the power of Messiah over death and Hades

*1:5: "And on that day I will break the bow of Israel  
in the valley of Jezreel."*

For Cyril<sup>31</sup> this prophecy refers literally to the victory of Hazael of Damascus (842-806 B.C.) over Israel, and spiritually it points to Christ's resurrection: "Having been laid in the tomb, he (i. e. Christ) rose again, turning their insidious schemes into nothing, and breaking the bow, he is no longer subject to suffering."

*2:2: The sons of Judah and the sons of Israel shall be  
gathered together, and they shall appoint for themselves  
one head<sup>32</sup> and shall come up out of the land.<sup>33</sup>*

*For great is the day of Jezreel.*

This prophecy on increase in population, the restoration of the two united states under one leader, and their return from captivity may also be read as a typology. The last fulfillment of this prophecy will occur when the former "Not-My-People," the Gentiles,<sup>34</sup> will share God's blessings initially made to Abraham (Rm 9:24f),<sup>35</sup> resulting in a great increase in number of the New Israel. Thus, united under one leader, Jesus Christ,<sup>36</sup> and by the power of his resurrection, the new community of faith will be able to rise again from the dust on the last day.<sup>37</sup>

Having observed that this prophecy was spiritually (πνευματικῶς) fulfilled in Christ, Cyril<sup>38</sup> explains: "'They come up out of the land,' namely they live the life of the saints (τῶν ὁγίων), 'for great is the day of Jezreel.' For, indeed, great is the day of Christ, when he will raise to life all the dead. In fact, he will descend (καταβήσεται) from heaven, and will sit on his glorious throne. 'And he will give everyone according to his works' (Mt 16:27). Therefore, if one decides that the day signifies the time of the Epiphany (τῆς ἐπιδημίας), when the remission of those who sinned is

given by (παρὰ) Christ to the Greeks and Judeans, and to those who have sinned (πεπλημμεληκόσι) against him, this will not deviate from the true words. For David too said about the time of the coming of our Savior: ‘This is the day that the Lord has made; let us rejoice in it.’ [Ps 118:24].”<sup>39</sup>

*3:2: So I bought her<sup>40</sup> for myself for fifteen shekels of silver, and a homer of barley and a lethech of barley.<sup>41</sup>*

Based on the LXX’s rendition of the price, Cyril<sup>42</sup> offers an allegorizing interpretation. First, he considers “silver” a type of the “instructive word”; then, he divides “fifteen (pieces) of silver” into seven (a reference to the Sabbath or the seventh day, and the Old Law), and eight (indicating Christ’s resurrection which occurred on the “eighth day,” and the New Law), hence the whole number may represent the Old and New Testaments.<sup>43</sup>

*6:2: He will revive us<sup>44</sup> after two days;<sup>45</sup> on the third day<sup>46</sup> he will raise us up<sup>47</sup> that we may live in his presence.*

“After two days” (אַחֲרַיִם יָמִים)... “on the third day.” Alone, “the third day” indicates a short period of time (Gen 22:4; 40:20; Ex 19:11); here, connected with “two days,” it looks oddly like a repetition, since the prefixed אַ “after” (cf. Ju 11:4) points to the day after two days, that is, “the third day.”<sup>48</sup> Probably, this period refers to the time when a revival was still possible, before the body began to decompose (Jn 11:39; cf. Jon 2:1).<sup>49</sup> What could signify the recovery or even the revival of a nation after such a short interval of two days? This sequence of numerals remains meaningless unless the text is read as a messianic prophecy regarding Christ’s resurrection: “two days” refers to the time Jesus’ body spent in the tomb and “the third day” points to his glorious resurrection. Writing to the Corinthians, St. Paul mentions that Jesus “was raised (ἐγήγερται) on the third day in accordance with the scriptures” (1 Cor 15:4), probably alluding to Hos 6:2.

The Targum interprets the Hosean text in connection with the final resurrection. Yet due to the polemic with Christian circles, the author of the Aramaic translation replaced the references to the number of days with his own interpretation (here, in italics), “He will give us life *in the days of consolations that will come; on the day of the resurrection of the dead* he will raise us up and we shall live before him.”

Among the Church’s writers, Tertullian (third century A.D.)<sup>50</sup> is the first author to relate this passage to Jesus’ resurrection, more precisely, to the scene of the myrrh-bearing women who went “at early dawn” (Lk 24:1: ὀρθρου βαθέως; cf. Hos 5:15: ὀρθιοῦσι πρὸς μὲ [LXX] “they will seek me early”) to their Master’s tomb to anoint his body. Theodoret of Cyrus<sup>51</sup> explains: “For there is no need of a period of time for curing, but he will grant swift health. By these he designates the Savior’s resurrection which occurred after three days, which mediated the universal resurrection, giving all of us the hope in immortality made possible through the knowledge of God.” Similarly, St. Cyril of Alexandria<sup>52</sup> hints at resurrection when he writes: “These things [healing and restoration] will occur to the mortals not for the first time, not even for the second time, but for the third time, namely, for the last and uttermost time. For all periods of time number three [phases]: initial, middle and last, when Christ appeared to us. That is why the very ones say from medical experience: the healing will happen after two days, as the prophetic word measures one day opportune for us... We shall rise together with Christ; and since one died for all, we live His life, not removed from the eyes of God for transgression, nor cast behind for sin, but brought in sight and having confidence in Him for the righteousness in Christ.” Theophilact of Bulgaria<sup>53</sup> interprets: “Certainly, it alludes to the mystery according to nature. For he has struck the nature in death and gave those who sin to death. But he inserted (παρενέβαλε) his Son in the stricken nature, the one who became a cure for the blow of death; he healed and raised

(ἀνέστησε) us on the third day. For by raising the acquisition (πρόσλημμα) he assumed from us, he bestowed upon us all the resurrection (ἀνάστασιν), so that we may have it at specific times (εἰς καιροῖς ἰδίους), and may live. For if one died for all, one also rose for all, so that we may live not far away from him, but being seen in his presence, and having perfect knowledge.” But for Theophilact the “third day” has also a spiritual meaning: “We shall rise on the third day, when the third part of the soul, the reasoning faculty (τὸ λογιστικὸν) will be quite clearly illuminated (φωτισθῇ) through spiritual contemplation (θεωρίας). For at that time, we shall live in the very presence of God, that is, contemplating him face to face.” Jerome<sup>54</sup> writes: “Therefore, God smote and healed us; for ‘God reproaches him whom he loves, and chastises every son whom he receives’ [Heb 12:6]; not only that he cures, but also he gives life after two days, and on the third day rising again from the lower regions, raised along with him the entire humankind. And after he healed those who were beaten and gave life to those healed, and raised those who received life, so we shall live in his sight, in whose absence, we shall lie dead. But we shall live in his presence; we shall know him and follow zealously to know the Lord, who rose on the third day, so that we may rise. In these sayings one explains what often we were reminded of, that Israel and Judah, namely, those ten and two tribes, should have one shepherd, King David, at the time when they will believe in the resurrected Lord; but the Judaeans in vain offered to themselves dreams for one thousand years, while the salvation of all was promised in return on the third day, when the Lord rose from the lower regions. The Hebrews interpret the second day in relation to the coming of Christ himself, and the third day in relation to the judgment, when they are to be saved. We do agree with respect to the first day, which is the first coming of the Savior. And as they are unable to answer, we conclude that the first day was according to their view,

the coming in humility of the Savior, the second in glory, the third in the posture of the judge. But those who mistrust the second and the third, they declare that the first got lost, for the second and the third cannot be termed without the first.” According to Theodore of Mopsuestia,<sup>55</sup> the prophet speaks of Israel’s restoration to a former prosperous situation, rather than a transition to a brand-new life: “Thus, he heals us immediately, as in two or three days the longest, in order to restore (ἀποκαταστήναι) us to the old prosperity.”

Historically, Hos 6:2 may be read as a reference to Israel’s future restoration following a short (cf. the metaphor “two days”) captivity (cf. Ezk 37:1-14), but typologically this text foreshadows Christ’s resurrection. The transition from historical to typological is possible since Christ in his life and activity embodied Israel. For instance, Jesus’ forty days in the wilderness parallels Israel forty-year journey. Thus, the Lord’s resurrection is a “typological embodiment” of Israel’s revival, which will be fulfilled literally at the end of time when the New Israel, all who believe in Christ, will be raised up (1 Thess 4:13-17).<sup>56</sup>

*6:3b: He will come to us like rain, like spring showers<sup>57</sup>  
that water the land.*

The second part of v. 3 spells out people’s trust in Yahweh’s bounty. His intervention (i. e., “his going forth” [יֵצֵא] <sup>58</sup> probably from his “place”; cf. 5:15) is as sure as the breaking of the “dawn” (שָׁחַר) <sup>59</sup> and Israel’s visitation by Yahweh is likened to the beneficent rains (of winter [December-February] and spring [March-April] ) watering the land. Jerome <sup>60</sup> compares this line with Ps 19:5, “And he comes forth from his pavilion like a bridegroom,” noticing: “He [God] is called not only morning or dawn, or daybreak (*diluculum*); but he comes to us as an early and late rain on earth. We accept Christ as an early rain, when the foundations of the faith are laid within us, and we take him as a late rain, when we grasp



the ripe fruits, and store them up in the lordly barn.” Julian of Eclanum<sup>61</sup> writes: “We shall know and search for him, who like the morning light expels the nights of our troubles and sufferings, and penetrates as a timely and late rain into the shared supplies.” Theodoret of Cyrus<sup>62</sup> interprets: “For as the daybreak does away with the darkness of night, in the same manner he will deliver us from the imminent temptations, and will offer the ray of his providence (προνοίας).” With respect to the “rain” metaphor, St. Cyril of Alexandria<sup>63</sup> writes: “For I suppose that he waters upon us, who received faith, and have known rightly his manifestation (ἐπιφάνειαν), in two ways. On one hand, he reveals the knowledge in the spirit of the old and legal, and in addition to these, prophetic teachings. In my view, this is the early rain. On the other hand, he adds to this the late [rain], the interpretation (νόησιν) of the Gospel’s teachings, and the most desirable (τριπτόθητον) grace of the apostolic preachings (κηρυγμάτων).” Theophilact of Bulgaria<sup>64</sup> offers a typological interpretation: “Therefore, God will come to us an early rain, when he will begin to liberate us from captivity. As for the late [rain], when he will bring us back to our homeland, he will treat us with great care, and he is distressed for us. After his resurrection, Christ appeared himself early in the morning to the women, and in the evening, the doors being shut, to the disciples [Jn 20:26]. There is an early rain in every soul, when he [God] reveals the knowledge (γνώσιν) of the Old [Testament], which rose first from the knowledge of God (θεογνωσίᾳς). But there is a late [rain], when he grants the Gospel’s comprehension (σύνεσιν), which beamed forth late in the last times.” Since Israel is still lingering in the realm of nature, possibly under the influence of Baalism,<sup>65</sup> ignoring Yahweh’s intervention in history, her ‘return’ to Yahweh remains an empty attempt at a personal relationship with him.<sup>66</sup>

13:14: *O Death, where are your plagues?*<sup>67</sup>

*O Sheol, where is your sting?*<sup>68</sup>

Cyril<sup>69</sup> writes: "He redeemed us from the hands of Hades, namely, from the tyranny of death, and Christ's death represents the means of redemption. For he willingly endured death on the cross for us and he triumphed over principalities and powers by nailing on the cross the written record against us."

Theodoret<sup>70</sup> explains: "These [sayings] have been completely (ἐντελές) and truly (ἀληθές) fulfilled after our Savior's resurrection (ἀνάστασιν). Since our first fruit (ἀπαρχή) [Christ] had risen, the hope of the resurrection was given to all of us."

Jerome<sup>71</sup> interprets: "The Lord liberated all, and redeemed them by the passion of his cross and blood-shedding; when his spirit descended to Hades and his flesh did not see corruption."

Theophilact<sup>72</sup> writes: "He will liberate the souls from the hand of Hades. For these [the souls] are in Hades, not in death, for they are immortal. In death are the bodies, for they are mortal. Everyone who commits a transgression is in Hades; his soul becomes without form (ἀειδής) and his own image is destroyed by it [Hades]."

## 6. *The Messianic Kingdom*

### (a) the New Covenant

2:21/19-22/20: *And I will betroth you to myself forever;  
I will betroth you to myself in righteousness and justice,  
in mercy and compassion.*

In 2:21/19 the new covenant is described in terms of a betrothal (שׂאֵר) <sup>73</sup> which, oddly enough, lasts "forever" (לְעוֹלָם). <sup>74</sup> There is no wedding ceremony, just an endless engagement, <sup>75</sup> a special "intimacy" (οἰκειότης) with God, as Theodore of Mopsuestia <sup>76</sup> calls it. The basic idea is that Yahweh wants to be eternally engaged to Israel. Instead of simply restoring the

previous union (the Sinai covenant), Yahweh treats Israel as a brand-new entity and by consequence he is betrothed to her. This means that God is willing to fully forgive and forget Israel's sinful past.

Cyril<sup>77</sup> considers "to me" (ἐμοι) as pointing to a personal relationship between God and humanity: "For we are united (ἐνοόμεθα) with God in Spirit, and became rich by participation (μέθεξιν) in his divine nature (φύσεως)." This covenant, adds Cyril, will not be administered by angels or humans (as the old covenant was by Moses' ministry), but by Christ the Lord, "through (διὰ) whom and in (ἐν) whom we are united with God."

For Theodoret,<sup>78</sup> the things said in v. 25/23 "occurred in a typical way (τυπικῶς) under Zorobabel, but in truth (κατ' ἀλήθειαν), after the incarnation of the Lord Christ, when he betrothed the Church to himself for eternity."

Jerome<sup>79</sup> discerns in this list of gifts three types of betrothal: "First, he [God] betrothed her [Israel] to himself in Abraham or in Egypt, so that he might have an everlasting spouse. Secondly, on Mt. Sinai, in the engagement, by giving her the equity (*iustitiam*) and judgment (*iudicium*) of the law, and the compassion (*misericordiam*) connected to the law, so that whenever she sinned she would be given up into captivity; whenever she sought penitence, she would be brought back to [her] homeland, and she would pursue compassion ... By his crucifixion and resurrection from the dead, he [Jesus] betrothed [her] not in the equity of the law, but rather in faith (*fide*) and grace (*gratia*) of the Gospel."

(b) Messiah the source of all good things

14:9: *I am like an evergreen<sup>80</sup> cypress;  
your fruit is found in me.*

Cyril<sup>81</sup> interprets: "For the whole fertility of those who obey God is fully assured in Christ and through Christ. 'For apart from me you can do nothing' [Jn 15:5]."

Similarly, Theophilact<sup>82</sup> explains: "For the fruit of the virtues is from Christ, the Logos."

(c) The work of the Spirit

*14:6a: I will be like the dew to Israel.*

Cyril<sup>83</sup> writes: "He will enrich and water the mind of those who have been called to repentance (μετάνιωσιν) in the consolation from above, namely, of the Spirit; for the dew comes from above."

(d) Israel and the Gentiles

As an attempt to alleviate the contrast between the prophet and a "wife of whoredom," Irenaeus<sup>84</sup> writes: "From these people God will build the Church, which will be made holy through the union with the Son of God, as this woman was made holy by her union with the prophet: Paul says that the unbelieving wife is made holy by her believing husband," (1 Cor 7:14).

According to Theophilact,<sup>85</sup> "the latter days" (Hos 3:5), marked by Israel's conversion, will occur when the "complete number (πλήρωμα) of Gentiles" forming Christ's Church will be reached.

*14:8a: They shall once again dwell<sup>86</sup> in my shadow.*

Cyril<sup>87</sup> explains: "This [prophecy] is wonderfully fulfilled in the Church [gathered] from the Gentiles, about which the Savior of all said in the Song of Songs: 'I delight to sit under his shade' [Song 2:3]."

### C. CONCLUSIONS

1. As one can notice, Hosea's messianic prophecies are treated in relation to other Old Testament passages. The unity of both Testaments is a fundamental premise of the Patristic exegesis. Only as it is interpreted as a component both of the Old Testament and of the Christian Scripture as a whole, the

book of Hosea may contribute to a better understanding of God's plan for humankind.

2. Hosea's 'Messianism' is viewed through the prism of the New Testament and the 'apostolic authority.' An important criterion for Patristic exegesis is the New Testament application of the messianic prophecies, e.g., Mt 2:15; cf. Hos 11:1; and 1 Cor 15:55; cf. Hos 13:14.

3. The Patristic writers are not interested so much in textual and formal matters, but rather in the theological and homiletical applicability of the prophetic material. Their main purpose is not reconstructing some pre-canonical phases of the biblical text, but a relentless quest for types which grant actuality to a message delivered centuries earlier. Yet their search for types frequently implies historical synapses (e.g., for Jerome "David their king" [3:5] refers both to Zerubabel and Christ).

4. While modern scholars amply discuss and persistently attribute the so-called "royal Messianism" (Hos 3:1-5; cf. 2:2) to a later editor from Judah, Christian writers barely mention this interpretative model, and when they do it, they emphasize the divine nature of the future Messianic king whose mission would affect Jews and Gentiles alike.

5. Maly mentions the covenant between Yahweh and Israel as a basis for his interpretation of the Hoseanic Messianism, but this idea is as old as the ancient Christian commentaries on Hosea. For instance, Cyril interprets the thrice "to me" in 2:21-22 as a reference to the personal relationship between God and humanity and man's "participation" (μέθεξις) to the divine nature.

6. What makes the Patristic exegesis on this topic original, vis-à-vis the two interpretative models (covenant and kingship) used by modern scholarship, is its focus on the close relationship between man's original fall and the restorative work of Messiah. Due to man's fall, human nature is 'stricken' with death. It is God the Creator who 'inserts' his Messiah

into this stricken nature so that the latter's victory over death and Hades may bring eternal life and communion with God for those who have responded to his calling.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> This study is a revised form of a paper presented at the annual SBL meeting, Boston, Nov. 21, 1999. The paper makes use of six Patristic commentaries, thus far untranslated into a modern language, on Hosea: Cyril of Alexandria (*Commentarius in Oseam prophetam*, PG 71, 9-328); Jerome (*In Osee prophetam*, PL 25, 815-946); Julian of Eclanum (*Commentarius in Oseam*, PL 21, 961-1034); Theodore of Mopsuestia (*Commentarius in Oseam prophetam*, PG 66, 123-210); Theodoret of Cyrus (*Enarratio in Oseam prophetam*, PG 81, 1551-1632); Theophilact of Bulgaria (*Commentarius in Oseam*, PG 126, 563-820).

Two studies, E. H. Maly, "Messianism in Osee," *CBQ* 19 (1957), pp. 213-225, and W.C. Kaiser, Jr., *The Messiah in the Old Testament*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1995), represent the starting point of this discussion.

<sup>2</sup> *CBQ* 19 (1957), pp. 213-15.

<sup>3</sup> *Messiah*, pp. 142-44.

<sup>4</sup> MT:  $\text{וַיִּשָּׁאָה}$ ; cf. Aquila  $\pi\lambda\eta\mu\epsilon\lambda\eta\sigma\omega\sigma\iota$  "they will err"; S:  $n\dot{h}w\dot{b}w\dot{n}$ , all presuppose  $\text{וַיִּשָּׁאָה}$  "to be guilty"; LXX:  $\acute{\alpha}\phi\alpha\nu\iota\sigma\theta\acute{\omega}\varsigma$  "they are brought to nought"; V: *deficiatis* "you fail," both versions imply  $\text{וַיִּשָּׁאָה}$  "to be desolated"; we follow here the MT's reading; based on the parallelism with v. 15b, the meaning of the verb  $\text{וַיִּשָּׁאָה}$  should be something on the order of, "to bear/suffer punishment"; thus the main idea of this saying is that Israel will "seek" the Lord when they will be under divine "punishment" or in the midst of "distress."

<sup>5</sup> MT:  $\text{וַיִּשָּׁאָה}$  "they will seek me early"; cf. LXX:  $\acute{o}\rho\theta\rho\iota\sigma\acute{\upsilon}\varsigma\iota$   $\pi\rho\acute{o}\varsigma$   $\mu\epsilon$ ; V: *mane consurgunt ad me*; S:  $n\dot{q}d\dot{m}w\dot{n}$ ; LXX adds  $\acute{\lambda}\acute{\epsilon}\gamma\omicron\nu\tau\epsilon\varsigma$  "saying" (= Hebrew  $\text{לֵאמַר}$ ) connecting v. 15 with 6:1; cf. S:  $w\dot{n}'m\dot{r}w\dot{n}$ ; T:  $\text{וַיִּמְרוֹן}$ .

<sup>6</sup> PG 71, 161 A.

<sup>7</sup> MT:  $\text{וַיִּשָּׁאָה}$  "and they shall return trembling to": a *constructio praegnans* as in 1:2b (cf. Wolff, *Hosea*, p. 57; see our commentary on 1:2); LXX:  $\kappa\alpha\iota$   $\acute{\epsilon}\kappa\sigma\tau\acute{\eta}\sigma\omicron\nu\tau\alpha\iota$   $\acute{\epsilon}\pi\acute{\iota}$  "and they shall be amazed at"; S:  $w\dot{n}d'w\dot{n}$  "and they shall know"; T:  $\text{וַיִּתְחַנֵּן}$   $\text{לְפָנֵי}$   $\text{יְהוָה}$  "and they shall be present for the worship of the Lord."

<sup>8</sup> Cf. Garrett, *Hosea*, *Joel*, p. 104.

<sup>9</sup> PG 71, 109 A-B; cf. Theophilact of Bulgaria (PG 126, 629 A-B); Jerome (PL 25, 845).

<sup>10</sup> PG 81, 1569 B. A similar interpretation is found in Theodore of Mopsuestia (PG 66, 145 C-D), Theophilact of Bulgaria (PG 126, 629 A), and Jerome (PL 25, 845).

<sup>11</sup> PL 25, 845. Note Jesus' description of God as "good" (ἀγαθός, Mk 10:18) and "perfect" (τέλειος, Mt 5:48); see Jacob (*Osée*, 37) who compares Hos 3:5 with Jer 33:9, found in a similar eschatological context, equating "goodness" with "perfection," understood as the main purpose of God's work.

<sup>12</sup> MT: וּבְאַיָּתוֹ; cf. V: *et in fortitudine sua* "and in his strength"; S; Aquila, Symmachus, Theodotion; all these read אַ "strength," hence the rendition "manhood"; but LXX: καὶ ἐν κόποις αὐτοῦ "and in his labors."

<sup>13</sup> PG 71, 284 A-B.

<sup>14</sup> One Hebrew ms. (K 224) has אֵלַי "to me," which according to North, VT 8 (1958): 430-31, is the original reading (cf. Isa 8:3). More probable seems Wolff's (*Hosea*, 8) explanation, for whom this reading is an abbreviation of אֵלָיו "to him"; see also Macintosh, *Hosea*, p. 19.

<sup>15</sup> MT: יָרַךְ עָאֵל LXX: Ἰεζραὲλ; LXXV: Ἰεσραὲλ; cf. OL *israhel*; V: *Iezrahel*; T: מְבָרָרִיא "scattered ones" as a reference to God's scattering of Israel in exile.

<sup>16</sup> PG 71, 40.

<sup>17</sup> PL 25, 825.

<sup>18</sup> MT: בְּשׁוּרֵי מָקָם (root שׁוּר II "to go away"); cf. Aquila: ἐκκλίνοντός μου ἀπ' αὐτῶν "when I turn away from them"; V: *cum recessero ab eis*; T: בסלקותי שכינתי מנהון "when I remove my presence from them"; but LXX σάρξ μου ἐξ αὐτῶν "my flesh is from them" misreads בָּשָׂר.

<sup>19</sup> PG 81, 1604 B.

<sup>20</sup> PG 126, 729 C-D.

<sup>21</sup> MT: כִּי; most scholars take כִּי here in a temporal sense, "when"; but the ancient versions LXX: ὅτι "because"; V: *quia* (cf. T, S) suppose a causal sense.

<sup>22</sup> MT: וּמִמִּצְרַיִם "And out of Egypt"; as Macintosh (*Hosea*, 439) notices, T offers a temporal interpretation, לְהוֹ בְּנֵי "and from the time of Egypt I called them sons."

<sup>23</sup> MT: לִבְנִי "my son"; cf. V: *filium meum*; S: *bry*; Aquila and Theodotion: τὸν υἱόν μου; but LXX: τὰ τέκνα αὐτοῦ "his children"; according to Wolff (*Hosea*, p. 190), the LXX ("his children") harmonizes "Israel" in v. 1a with "them" in v. 2.

<sup>24</sup> PL 25, 915-916.

<sup>25</sup> Most likely this phrase designates Hebrew, rather than Aramaic, because the Targum reads בְּנֵי לְהוֹן "and ever since Egypt I called them sons," trying to avoid a Christological interpretation; cf. Macintosh, *Hosea*, p. 439.

<sup>26</sup> PG 126, 757 B-C.

<sup>27</sup> PL 21, 1016 A-B.

<sup>28</sup> PL 25, 874; cf. Julian of Eclanum (PL 21,997 B); St. Cyril of Alexandria (PG 71, 181 D).

<sup>29</sup> PG 71, 184 A, 185 B; cf. Theophylact of Bulgaria (PG 126, 689 A).

<sup>30</sup> PG 126, 692 B.

<sup>31</sup> PG 71, 44. According to Theodore of Mopsuestia, PG 66, 129, the breaking of the bow refers to the subjugation of Israel by the Assyrians.

<sup>32</sup> MT: ראש "head"; LXX: ἀρχήν.

<sup>33</sup> T adds גליוהון "(the land of) their exile."

<sup>34</sup> Origen, PG 14, 1152, interprets the name "Not-My-People" as an allusion to the Gentiles called by the "living God" to become his sons; idem, "Homélies sur Jérémie," SC 232, 384; cf. Cyprian, *Ad Quirinum*, CCSL III/I, 19; Irenaeus, SC 100, 670.

<sup>35</sup> Wolff, *Hosea*, p. 29.

<sup>36</sup> As we saw above, in the commentary, "Jezreel" is a type of Christ, thus the "day of Jezreel" may refer to the day of his resurrection. For Theophylact of Bulgaria (PG 126, 592), the "day of Jezreel" points to both the cross (σταυροῦ) and resurrection (ἀναστάσεως) of Christ.

<sup>37</sup> According to Garrett, *Hosea*, 73, Ezek 37 functions in the same way, as both a reference to Israel's restoration and a type of the resurrection.

<sup>38</sup> PG 71, 53-57.

<sup>39</sup> For Jerome (PL 25, 829), "they come up out of the land" refers to Christians who will ascend "from the earthly senses and from the humiliation of the latter, and they will receive the great day of the seed of God."

<sup>40</sup> MT: ואֶצְרֵתָּ "and I bought her"; LXX: καὶ ἐμισθωσάμην "I hired [her]"; following the Greek version, Theodoret of Cyrus (PG 81, 1568 C) suggests that the "prophet offered a payment (μισθὸν) to the woman"; V: *et fodi eam* "I dug her in"; (Jerome [PL 25, 843] explains: "When he says, 'I dug,' one should understand the vineyard God planted, which in many places in Scripture indicates the Jewish people.") S: *wzbnth* "I redeemed her"; T: ופרקחתי "I redeemed them."

<sup>41</sup> MT: וְלֶחֶךְ שְׂעִרִים "and a lethech of barley"; LXX: νεβελ οἴνου "a pitcher of wine" (νεβελ is the transliteration of Hebrew נבל "skin, skin-bottle, pitcher") points to a different *Vorlage* than that of MT. For Epiphanius (PG 43:272-273) "lethech" was an explanation of "homer": "Lethech (λεθέα) is mentioned in prophet Hosea, 'for I hired [her] for myself for a lethech of barley,' but in some manuscripts, there is only 'a homer (γόμep) of barley'; for these indicate 15 measures"; see Patterson, *The Septuagint Text of Hosea*, pp. 32-33. According to Barthélemy, *Critique textuelle de l'Ancien Testament*, p. 502, the LXX's reading was



probably influenced by 1 Sam 1:24 or 2 Sam 16:1, where νεβελ οἴνου concludes similar lists of provisions; V: *et dimidio choro hordei* “half of cor of barley” relies on Jerome’s commentary (PL 25, 842): “And for *nebel vini* Hebrew reads lethech seorim, which other interpreters translated ἡμίκορον *hordei*, namely half of a cor, which represents 15 measures.”

<sup>42</sup> PG 71, 105 A.

<sup>43</sup> A similar interpretation is found in Jerome (PL 25, 843).

<sup>44</sup> MT: יִחְיֶינוּ “he will revive us”; cf. V: *vivificabit*; S: *wnhyn*; note that LXX: ὑγιώσει “he will heal (us)” and Symmachus: ἐπιδήσει “he will bind (us)” continue the striking-healing imagery of v. 1.

<sup>45</sup> MT: מִיָּמָיו “after two days”; cf. LXX: μετὰ δύο ἡμέρας; V: *post duos dies*; S: *ywmt* “in days”; T: לְיוֹמֵי נַחֲמָה דַּעֲתִידִין לְמִיָּחִי “in the days of consolations to come in the future.”

<sup>46</sup> MT: בַּיּוֹם הַשְּׁלִישִׁי “on the third day”; cf. LXX: ἐν τῇ ἡμέρᾳ τῇ τρίτῃ; T: בְּיוֹם אַחִיזָה מִיָּחִי “on the day of the resurrection of the dead.”

<sup>47</sup> MT: יִקְבֹּצֵנוּ “he will raise us up”; cf. V: *suscitabit nos*; S: *nqymn*; T: וְיִקְבֹּצֵנוּ; but LXX: ἀναστήσόμεθα “we shall be raised,” perhaps harmonizing this form with the subject of the following verb (cf. Macintosh, *Hosea*, p. 224).

<sup>48</sup> According to Wolff, *Hosea*, p. 118f., the sequence “after two days, on the third day” sounds like a proverb whose genuine significance is unknown to us. In any event, it does not allude to the ancient beliefs in the resurrection of a fertility god (Adonis, Tammuz, etc.; W. W. Baudissin, *Adonis und Esmun*, Leipzig, 1911, p. 411ff.) because the text concerns a people rather than a deity; cf. Mays, *Hosea*, p. 95. For Macintosh, *Hosea*, p. 221f., this phrase is a “rhetorical device” to describe a short period of time.

<sup>49</sup> Cf. Andersen and Freedman, *Hosea*, p. 422.

<sup>50</sup> Cf. *Adversus Marcionem* IV 43; *Adversus Iudaeos* XIII, 23; cf. S. V. McCarland, “The Scripture Basis of ‘On the Third Day,’” *JBL* 48 (1929), pp. 124-37.

<sup>51</sup> PG 81, 1581 C-D.

<sup>52</sup> PG 71, 1

<sup>53</sup> PG 126, 673 C-676 A.

<sup>54</sup> PL 25, 867.

<sup>55</sup> PG 66, 160 C.

<sup>56</sup> Cf. Garrett, *Hosea*, p. 158f.

<sup>57</sup> MT: וְיָרֵחַ; LXX: καὶ ὄψιμος (τῇ γῇ) “and latter rain (to the earth); cf. V: *et serotinus terrae*; but S: *dmrw* <sup>l</sup> *lʿr*<sup>c</sup>; cf. T: דְּמַרְוֵי עֶרְעָא “that saturates the earth”; as Macintosh (*Hosea*, pp. 226, 228) notices, there are two interpretations of MT’s reading: either a noun (“early rain”) or a

Hiph'il of ירה related to ריה "to fill, water"; the first alternative, though supported by LXX and V, cannot explain the construction with the word "earth"; the second interpretation, supported by S, T, and the occurrence of a similar phrase in one of the Qumran hymns (1QH iv 6), seems more plausible in this context; the verbal form can be explained as a dialectal feature of Hosea's language.

<sup>58</sup> The word מוצא "going forth" derives from the root צא "to go out" and it refers to the sunrise (Ps 19:7).

<sup>59</sup> As Macintosh, *Hosea*, p. 225, notices a connection between שחר "dawn" and the Ugaritic deity *Šhr* (*Šaḥru*) (so H. G. May) should be rejected for the simple reason that Yahweh cannot be compared with a pagan god.

<sup>60</sup> PL 25, 868.

<sup>61</sup> PL 21, 993 B-C.

<sup>62</sup> PG 81, 1584 A.

<sup>63</sup> PG 71, 164 C.

<sup>64</sup> PG 126, 676 B-C.

<sup>65</sup> Cf. Wolff, *Hosea*, p. 119.

<sup>66</sup> See Mays, *Hosea*, p. 96. On the other hand, Macintosh, *Hosea*, p. 227, argues that Hosea here, as in chapter 2, polemically attributes to Yahweh the functions and the sphere of Baal.

<sup>67</sup> MT: דְּבָרַיָּךְ "plagues" (= דָּבָר); cf. Symmachus: πληγή σου "your plague"; LXX: οἰκτὴ "penalty," and νίκη "victory" (in some mss. of the LXX; cf. 1 Cor 15:54); cf. S: *zkwtk* "your victory"; V: *mors tua* "your death."

<sup>68</sup> MT: קֶשֶׁתְּךָ; LXX: τὸ κέντρον σου "your sting" (cf. 1 Cor 15:55); cf. V: *morsus tuus*.

<sup>69</sup> PG 71, 312 C.

<sup>70</sup> PG 81, 1628 A.

<sup>71</sup> PL 25, 937.

<sup>72</sup> PG 126 800 B-D—801 A.

<sup>73</sup> The verb ארש (Pi'el) designates the premarital period, before paying the bride-price (מָהָר) to the bride's father, the last and the main act in acquiring a wife (Gen 34:12; Ex 22:15f.; 1 Sam 18:25). On the other hand, the verb לקח "to take" denotes in Hosea (1:2) as elsewhere in the Old Testament (e. g., Dt 20:7) the beginning of the marriage, after the bride left her father's house and crossed her husband's threshold.

<sup>74</sup> According to Jenni, "Das Wort *ʿōlam* im Alten Testament," *ZAW* 64 (1952): 235-39, לעולם "forever" is a technical term denoting a lifelong commitment (cf. Ex 21:6) made by the future husband by the payment of the bride-price.

<sup>75</sup> After showing that the old covenant was neither unbroken nor eternal, St. Cyril (PG 71, 92) describes the new covenant in terms of an eternal betrothal: “By the time of restoration, namely, at the time of Christ’s epiphany (ἐπιδημίας), another type of betrothal appeared, eternal (διηλεκτής), firm (ἀσάλευτος), much more radiant (λαμπρότερος) than the first one (πρώτου), and in a better condition than its foreshadow (σκιᾶς). For God of all, in the same manner as the one who lavishes his wife with the supply of sensual service (σαρκικῆς δουλείας), through the foreshadow and figures (τύπων) called to a spiritual purification (ἀποκάθαρσιν). In addition, he determined (ἐμέτρει) the time for the betrothal (μνηστεία). For the first one was not faultless (ἄμemptος), according to Paul, nor was it undecaying (ἀγήρω), nor far from being abolished. Thus, the place of a second one (δευτέρας) was sought, namely, of a new one (νέας), which, by Christ, brought to us the gift (δωρεᾶς) and the grace (χάριτος), neither temporary, nor for carnal freedom. For he enlisted us among the children of God and gave us the promise (ἀρραβὼν) of the Spirit, and prescribed eternal laws.” In the same vein, Theodoret of Cyrus (PG 81, 1565) interprets “forever” (εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα) as a reference to the “Church, gathered from among the Jews and Gentiles... who receives the eternal goods.” Theophilact of Bulgaria (PG 126, 620) shows that the first covenant was not eternal because the “service (λατρεία) of the law was temporary (πρόσκαιρος).”

<sup>76</sup> PG 66, 141.

<sup>77</sup> PG 71, 93. Similarly, Theophilact of Bulgaria (PG 126, 620) writes: “For not an angel, not an elder, but he, the Lord, saved us.”

<sup>78</sup> PG 81, 1568.

<sup>79</sup> PL 25, 840.

<sup>80</sup> MT: לְעֵצִים; LXX: φυλάσσουσα “leafy.”

<sup>81</sup> PG 71, 325 C.

<sup>82</sup> PG 126, 816 B-C.

<sup>83</sup> PG 71, 321 A.

<sup>84</sup> *Contre les hérésies*, IV, 20, 12 (Sources Chrétiennes 2, pp. 670-71).

<sup>85</sup> PG 126, 629 A-B.

<sup>86</sup> MT: בְּצִלְיָו “the inhabitants of his shadows” (a *status constructus* broken by preposition; cf. Isa 9:1); LXX: καθιόνται “they will dwell”; cf. S: *wntbwn*.

<sup>87</sup> PG 71, 321 D.

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## Neoplatonism, the *Filioque* and Photios' Mystagogy

PHILIP ZYMARIS

### I. INTRODUCTION

It is a well-known fact of Church history that during the ninth century the undivided Church suffered a minor schism from 867-879 which sowed the seeds for the final schism between East and West two centuries later. This schism has been dubbed the "Photian Schism" thanks to the title of the excellent treatise by Francis Dvornik. This work, however, was in fact the first to show, through objective historical analysis, that Photios certainly was not solely responsible for this schism.<sup>1</sup> One could even venture to suggest, based on the actual historical events, that this schism could more correctly be called the "Nicholonian Schism" since it was in fact Pope Nicholas I's insistence on meddling in Eastern affairs which led to the schism. What is not so well known is the fact that the matter of the *Filioque* clause in the Symbol of Faith was an important issue in the dynamics of this affair and that during and after this period Photios wrote some important theological works which criticized the *Filioque* as a very serious matter, if not downright heresy. Of these works the most important was his *Mystagogy of the Holy Spirit*,<sup>2</sup> which has been dubbed the first reasoned response from an Eastern "Cappadocian" point of view to the Augustinian theology which led to the *Filioque*.<sup>3</sup> This work is therefore

an important work that should be taken into consideration in any dialogue having to do with the *Filioque*. Due to the relevance of this work, a brief summary of the arguments used by Photios against the *Filioque* will be attempted here. However, in order to better understand these arguments, this will be preceded by a brief introduction to the philosophical and theological basis of Augustinian theology, which led to the dissemination of the *Filioque* in the West.

## II. AUGUSTINE AND NEOPLATONISM

Augustine, in his honest desire to defend the faith, did that which so many apologists did – he attempted to explain his faith within the context of the philosophical structures known in the Greco-Roman world; that is to say, he wished to defend the rationality of the Christian faith by seeking common ground between Christianity and pre-Christian philosophy.<sup>4</sup> As would naturally be expected, Augustine's own personal philosophical background and life experiences played a major role in the way he ultimately formulated his theology. As is well known from his *Confessions*, in his search for truth during his youth, which led to his ultimate conversion to Christianity, he passed from Manichaeism to Neoplatonism to Christianity. Hence, his theology bears the obvious stamp of Neoplatonism. In order to understand the relationship between the *Filioque*, Neoplatonism and Augustine's theology, a relationship which was also discerned by Photios, a basic knowledge of the Neoplatonic system is required.

Neoplatonism is a later version of the philosophy developed by the great ancient Greek philosopher Plato. Ancient Greek philosophy sought to answer the dilemma of the ontology or true being of things and Plato and Aristotle represent two pinnacles in the working out of these questions. For Plato the true being or reality of things was to be found in his so-

called immaterial universals, i.e., the perfect prototypes that the material particulars imitated.<sup>5</sup> Within this scheme God is seen as the universal above all the particular universals, a "Universal" universal,<sup>6</sup> the infinite One which, in order to be distinguished from the multitude of particulars, was defined as being "simple," that is to say, having no composition, and thus transcending both the plurality of immaterial universals as well as the plethora of particular material finite beings. This definition of the One as simple implies also that essence, will and activity are wholly indistinguishable in the One – a fact that will become crucial regarding the *Filioque*.

Interestingly enough, this definition of the One as "simple," which purports to set the One above all other finite beings, in the end actually brings it down to the same level as the multitude of finite things. The fact that the One is no particular finite being means that it has being only in opposition to those very finite things and thus cannot exist without them – the One cannot exist by itself; as long as the One exists the multitude of finite beings necessarily also exist. This does two things: a) it causes created things to be eternally created, which means that these eternal particulars are in fact eternal gods in themselves, emanations from the divine essence (since there is no distinction here between essence and energies) which leads to pagan polytheism; and b) it puts the One under necessity: to exist it must necessarily create the multitude of particulars. Plato does indeed talk of a creation in time, but his God had no choice but to use the pre-existing eternal ideas or universals and was compelled to comply with the physical laws of the *cosmos* of which he was also a part; he was therefore not *absolutely* free to create *ex nihilo*.<sup>7</sup> The God of Plato, and later of Neoplatonism, therefore, is certainly not the same as the biblical, personal God who freely created the world *ex nihilo* as an act of love. The God of the Bible has no need of the world in order to exist and there was a time when the world or *cosmos* did not exist.

In any case, Platonism in time developed into Neoplatonism due mainly to the work of the philosopher Plotinus (205- 270) and his disciple Porphyry (234-305). These developments, however, could not make the Platonic God a free God and could not release the system from degenerating into polytheism. For, according to the Neoplatonic scheme, the One God necessarily creates two finite particulars, which ultimately lead to all the others: he produces the *Nous*, which, in turn *together* with the One, produces the World-soul.<sup>8</sup> Because will and activity are identified with the essence, these acts of creation, as well as the creation of all finite particulars which follow, are acts of the essence. Thus, creation is understood as a series of emanations *ad infinitum* from the divine essence, since there is no distinction in this system between essence and energies and between theology and economy; rather, all things are seen as pieces of the divine essence, and therefore all things are gods in themselves. The further one moves away from the One the more particulars there are – there is here an obvious priority of unity over diversity, of simplicity over composition, of spirit over matter. Thus, the increased diversity, composition and matter seen in the emanations as one moves farther and farther from the One is seen as a form of degeneration.

A study of Augustine's theology reveals that it clearly follows upon this Neoplatonic model. Of utmost significance, first of all, is the fact that for Augustine the divine essence corresponds to the Neoplatonic One and is defined by Augustine once again as being "simple," transcending any plurality within the Godhead such as the attributes of God (wisdom, truth, justice, etc.) and the Persons of the Trinity. Here, as in the Neoplatonic system, being, will and activity in God are wholly indistinguishable, which signifies that ultimately the attributes of God and even the Persons of the Trinity themselves are identified with the essence. This in turn means that these divine attributes and the Persons of



the Trinity become relativized to the point where they have no real ontological value and are thus mere conventions of language!<sup>9</sup>

Within this scheme where the Persons of the Trinity were relativized in favor of the unity and simplicity of the essence, the patristic axiom that the Father is the only source or principle in the Godhead<sup>10</sup> was also relativized in favor of the essence. Although St. Augustine at times refers to the more traditional monarchy of the Father, one perceives in his works an uneasy tension between this patristic view and his Neoplatonic definition of the Deity which purports that the essence, as the *One*, is the only source of the Godhead.<sup>11</sup> One finds that this uneasy tension historically gave way in the West to a total prevalence of the latter views, thanks to the Carolingians. It was due exactly to this latter view, where the essence came to be understood as the only true principle in the Godhead, that Augustine, in an attempt to defend the dogma of the divine consubstantiality of the Son against the Arian view that the Son is a creature, could claim that both the Father and the Son cause the Holy Spirit. This in fact fit in perfectly with the Neoplatonic scheme for, as the *One* causes the *Nous* and the *Nous* causes the World-soul along with the *One*, so the Father (here identified with the essence because of the essence's simplicity as stated above) causes the Son and then the Son together with the Father in turn both cause the Spirit. Thus the Holy Spirit proceeds from an uncaused cause and a caused cause exactly as does the World-soul in the Neoplatonic model. Augustine was also able to cite the Gospel of John to develop this scheme further by stating that God as essence can be identified with Love; therefore the Trinity constitutes the three aspects of love: the lover, the beloved and the love itself. In this way Father and Son love each other in the Holy Spirit; the Spirit, as a product of their love, proceeds from them both as from one principle.<sup>12</sup>

Interestingly enough, although this Augustinian essence-

centered theology, which led to the *Filioque*, was unprecedented in the history of the Church, it in fact enjoyed an unprecedented success and popularity amongst the Franks, who invaded and eventually took over the Western half of the Roman Empire<sup>13</sup> – so much so that Augustine became *the* Father of the Western Church *par excellence*.<sup>14</sup> Thus, during the sixth century one finds that the so-called *Quincunque Vult* or “Athanasian” Creed (although it had little to do with St. Athanasius the Great), a thoroughly Augustinian symbol of faith which contained the *Filioque*, was spreading throughout Gaul. In Spain the Visigoths, led by King Reccared, rejected Arianism and supported the *Filioque* as a way to stress the divine consubstantiality of the Son as seen in the councils of Toledo during the sixth century. By the eighth century the *Filioque* must have been in England also, for Alcuin of York (735-800) seems to have brought this tradition from England to Charlemagne.<sup>15</sup>

This process whereby the *Filioque* became the trademark of the West was aided by the fact that in both East and West pride, ignorance and the issue of language, as well as political estrangement, led to the hardening of their differing theological positions, which encouraged the development of a polemic theology which used the *Filioque* as a slogan and point of reference to differentiate West from East. The iconoclastic controversy (726-787 and 813-843) and Emperor Leo III's (717-741) subsequent forced imposition of Constantinopolitan ecclesiastical jurisdiction upon Calabria, Sicily and Illyricum also contributed greatly to this alienation of East and West and led specifically to a persistent attempt on the part of the popes to regain these ecclesiastical territories. This problem was still acute during Photios' time and, with the mistaken geographical notion that Bulgaria was part of Eastern Illyricum, Pope Nicholas I sent Frankish missionaries to Bulgaria who expelled the original Byzantine missionaries and introduced the *Filioque* into their worship and

theology. Bulgaria was in fact part of the Roman province of Thrace, which was always under Eastern ecclesiastical jurisdiction – hence various popes' persistent claims on that region in fact had no historical basis. Therefore, the historical irony is that it was exactly because of this mistaken geography that the *Filioque* was introduced on Eastern territory and ultimately brought to the attention of Photios.

This addition of the *Filioque* to the Creed, then, was reported to Photios by the Byzantine missionaries who had returned to Constantinople after being forcibly expelled from Bulgaria by the Frankish missionaries. They also reported to him various other Latin ecclesiastical customs that were imposed on the Bulgarians by the Franks and the fact that these missionaries freely derided Byzantine usages and portrayed the Western-Latin version as the only genuine Christianity. Because of the seriousness of the matter, Photios sent to all the Eastern Patriarchs an encyclical letter within which he described this uncanonical addition of the *Filioque* into the Creed, as well as the imposition of Latin usages on this territory at the very doorstep of Constantinople. In this document he used some of the same arguments against the *Filioque* which he later developed further in his greater work on the subject: the *Mystagogy of the Holy Spirit*, completed during his second exile in 886.

### III. PHOTIOS' *MYSTAGOGY*

One of Photios' main arguments against the *Filioque*, found in his encyclical letter and in the *Mystagogy*, was based on the axiom that anything within the Trinity must either be in common to all three Persons or the property of one only. He writes: "If whatever is in God is not seen in the unity and consubstantiality of the omnipotent Trinity, it clearly belongs to only one of the three Persons. And the proces-

sion of the Spirit is not [common]...it is, therefore, of only one of the Three Persons."<sup>16</sup> Therefore the procession of the Spirit cannot be common to the Father and the Son only, "for reason demands equality for each Person so that each Person exchanges the grace of causality indistinguishably."<sup>17</sup> Otherwise the Father and the Son have this privilege, while the Spirit, supposedly of equal rank regarding the divinity, is "stripped of equal privilege."<sup>18</sup> According to this argument, however, the Spirit would either have to proceed from itself<sup>19</sup> or would have to produce another Person<sup>20</sup> or, perhaps, if the Son produces the Spirit, then the Spirit should also produce the Son.<sup>21</sup> As Photios wrote: "You will perhaps object...why did not the Son himself, in producing the Spirit who is consubstantial with Him, accord Him [the Spirit] the faculty and honor which He received, so that the Spirit could also have the glory of producing a consubstantial Person?"<sup>22</sup> Otherwise the Spirit would be further removed from the Father than the Son,<sup>23</sup> a lesser being, a "grandson."<sup>24</sup>

This same conclusion also follows from the Carolingian position known to Photios that the Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son because the Son "has" all that the Father has. According to this logic, Photios discerns that the Holy Spirit, in order to be an equal consubstantial Person, must also produce another Person; this Person in turn should produce another Person and so forth *ad infinitum*. Hence, as one would expect, the very same problems that show up in Neoplatonism reappear here: i.e., the necessary emanations of the One *ad infinitum*, which leads to polytheism, atheism<sup>25</sup> and pagan mythology.<sup>26</sup> As in Neoplatonism, the only other solution is an absolute modalistic unity, which for Photios leads to Sabellianism.<sup>27</sup>

It is clear that Photios understood that the *Filioque* clause inevitably stemmed from an essence-centered theology. For one can either accept that the dual procession implies that two separate Persons cause the Spirit, which would mean

that there are two principles – two Gods – in the Trinity, or one safeguards the monotheism of Christianity by swallowing these two personal causes within the all-encompassing divine essence.<sup>28</sup> This is possible again because of the requirement found in Neoplatonism and Augustinism that the essence be “simple.” Because of this “simplicity” all personal activities of the Trinity are relativized to the point where they become mere internal functionings of the essence and not true causes or principles; in this way they lose their ontological value and pose no threat to monotheism because the essence remains as the one source of the Godhead. This of course is tantamount to saying that all activities of the Persons as well as their very existence are in fact subsumed by the simplicity of the essence, which implies that the procession from Father and Son as well as the very existence of the Persons of the Trinity is ultimately relative, superfluous and artificial. Thus Photios asks: “If he [the Spirit] is known more fully in another procession *which is proper to the essence*, then what precise thing does that fashioning by another Person provide?”<sup>29</sup> In short, according to the Augustinian-Carolingian view rejected by Photios, the Christian God as Trinity is ultimately a relative matter!

For Photios this “relative Trinity” follows logically, if one is to accept the Carolingian view, because the double procession obviously upsets the equilibrium of the Trinity, making a true Trinity an impossibility. For if one does not end up with a monistic modalism, on the one hand, or a series of infinite emanations on the other, as stated above, one certainly will not end up with a Trinity – rather, according to Photios, one ends up either with a “dyad” or a “tetralogy.” For, he says, if the Father and the Son both produce the Spirit, this implies that the procession from the Father is somehow incomplete, which means that the Father himself is somewhat deficient and therefore needs the Son for His completion and perfection,<sup>30</sup> which in turn means that these two Persons are

in fact confused into one and the Trinity is in fact a dyad or diarchy.<sup>31</sup> On the other hand, Photios also posits the other possibility where, because of the fact that the Trinity is outside time, if the Spirit proceeds from both the Father and the Son simultaneously, two Spirits are actually produced and the Trinity becomes a “tetrology.”<sup>32</sup> Furthermore, if the Spirit has a double cause “will not composition be the result?”<sup>33</sup> Or, if the Spirit, as equal consubstantial Person in the Trinity, causes itself, as the Father and the Son cause it, then the Spirit is partially caused and partially a cause – a phenomenon which also destroys the oneness of the Spirit and makes “simplicity” in the Trinity impossible.<sup>34</sup>

In his *Mystagogy* Photios also refuted specific arguments used by the Carolingians in favor of the *Filioque*. For example, he refuted the argument found especially in Ratramnus’ *Contra Graecorum opposita Romanam Ecclesiam Infamantium*<sup>35</sup> that says that, since the Holy Spirit is known by the Apostle Paul as the “Spirit of the Son,” it follows that the Spirit proceeds from the Son. According to Photios this contention cannot be valid because, in patristic tradition, the expression “Spirit of the Son” points to the divine consubstantiality of the Spirit and has nothing to do with the Spirit’s spiration.<sup>36</sup> It is interesting to note that while the Carolingians interpreted this same expression as supporting a priority of the Son over the Spirit (Father-Son-Holy Spirit), Photios, on the other hand, interpreted this same expression as supporting (in the economy of salvation) a priority of the Spirit over the Son, i.e., a pneumatological conditioning of Christology (Father-Spirit-Son). In other words, rather than stressing that the Son sends the Spirit, this expression points to the fact that the Spirit in fact constitutes the Son as is seen at every crucial point in Christ’s ministry where His true identity is revealed, such as at His conception and baptism.<sup>37</sup> Photios was of course sure to make the distinction that this applies only to the economy of salvation and not to God as

He is eternally,<sup>38</sup> an important distinction not stressed by the Carolingians.

Against this same argument that the expression "Spirit of the Son" implies that the Spirit proceeds from the Son, Photios also used sheer common sense. For one also comes across such expressions as "the Spirit of wisdom," of "knowledge," etc. Do these imply that the Spirit proceeds from such attributes as wisdom and knowledge?<sup>39</sup> Also, does the expression the "Father of the Son" imply that the Father proceeds from the Son? Photios must also have come across Ratramnus' argument that John 16:14 ("He will take what is mine and declare it to you") proves again that the Spirit proceeds from the Son, for he stresses in the *Mystagogy* that taking something from someone is not the same as proceeding.<sup>40</sup> Rather, Photios sees this expression as pointing specifically to the Father as the sole source of the Spirit.<sup>41</sup>

Photios also dealt with the Carolingian argument that the *Filioque* is legitimate because numerous Fathers of the Church supposedly supported it. He replied to this argument with a clarification of the origin of authority in the Church and a proper interpretation of the authority of the Fathers of the Church. Photios is in agreement with the patristic view which stresses that the Church is *not* a collection of saintly *individuals*, rather the Church is conciliar, i.e., the Church is an event of communion, a *community* of sinners united as the body of Christ and striving towards eschatological perfection. Authority in the Church, therefore, never comes from any specific individual, no matter how saintly he may be, but rather through the ecclesial event of communion, through the body of the Church as a whole, which is expressed through the synods or councils of the Church. Thus, on the Carolingian method Photios writes: "You cite western Fathers. But this simply pours the West down the abyss, *because it contends with the whole world.*"<sup>42</sup>

Hence, for Photios the question of the proceeding of the

Holy Spirit was clearly settled in former Ecumenical Councils and reaffirmed once again recently at the Constantinopolitan Council of 879-880 which was approved by Pope John VIII. He wrote, referring to this council at which he presided, that "My John also...and the pious illustrious legates subscribed to it [the Creed without the *Filioque*] and signed it."<sup>43</sup> For this reason, he adds, there is no excuse for error regarding this issue of the procession of the Holy Spirit. How is it then, he asks, that they disobey both Ecumenical Council and Pope?<sup>44</sup>

In keeping with this conciliar spirit he stresses that, if ten or twenty fathers taught the *Filioque* as the Carolingians emphasize, there are many others that did not. One should also not take the Fathers who taught the *Filioque* out of context; in order to understand their intent one must be cognizant of the specific historical context in which they used the *Filioque*. The Fathers who fought heresy were often compelled to exaggerate their correct position to the point where, when taken out of its specific context, the teaching could be found to be erroneous. He writes: "You claim that Augustine and Jerome said these things. But perhaps they spoke out of the necessity of attacking the madness of the pagans...or of refuting another heretical opinion or of condescending to the weakness of their hearers, or *out of the necessity of any one of the many other reasons that human life daily represents*. If such a statement perchance escaped their lips because of one or more of the above reasons, why do you make a dogma and a law of what was not spoken by them with dogmatic significance and so bring irreparable ruin upon yourself by contentiously enlisting them in your dementia?"<sup>45</sup> Besides this, Photios clarifies, these Fathers, as individuals and not as *Church per se* (which is only expressed officially through the councils), could indeed err at times, for "thus is the human condition" and, if these Fathers, "though otherwise adorned with very fine virtues, slipped, either because of certain ig-



norance or by negligence...what is this to you?" In this same spirit he gave examples of illustrious Fathers who did indeed err, and even St. Basil the Great was included in this list.<sup>46</sup> These errors naturally occur because no one, regardless of his personal sanctity, is infallible, only the Church itself *as a whole* is infallible. Thus the Fathers must be interpreted taking into account the total consciousness of the Church, which is found most clearly in the Ecumenical Councils. For this reason any new teaching that has not yet been approved by an Ecumenical Council should not be advertised as a legitimate teaching of the Church, for thus one inadvertently brings shame to his Fathers. Rather than advertising such new teachings, one would do better, according to Photios, to imitate the sons of Noah and protect their Fathers' nudity and shame by hiding their imperfections "using silence and gratitude in place of a covering."<sup>47</sup> In short, one should embrace the men and not the errors.<sup>48</sup>

#### IV. CONTEMPORARY CONSEQUENCES

Does the *Filioque* have any consequences for "real life" in the Church today? It would seem to stand to reason that what we believe, both individually and collectively, is what we are as individuals and as society. Theology is therefore not an abstract exercise having nothing to do with real life – on the contrary, whether we realize it or not, the theology or set of beliefs a society holds (even if this theology is atheist) produces the culture of that society. Furthermore, even in a "post-Christian" epoch, as many describe our own, the theological history of a given region has produced cultural underpinnings which cannot be erased totally, regardless of what the present-day theological situation might be. If Photios is correct and the *Filioque* is as serious a matter as he claims, then what can we say about Western society,

which is historically based on the theology which produced the *Filioque*?<sup>49</sup> For example, does Photios' objection that the *Filioque* causes a general leveling of the distinctive differences of the Persons of the Trinity have an analogous effect on this society's conception of the human person? For, as was noted above, if, in order to stress the consubstantiality of the Persons of the Trinity, Carolingian theology claimed that each Person "has" exactly what the Father has, which means that they all become identically equal in the sense that they are all interchangeable, then their distinctive hypostatical properties are razed to the ground in the name of supposed "equality." This form of equality, however, which stifles personal difference and thus also stifles freedom in the name of conformity to the One impersonal essence, is seen by Photios as an unjust distortion: "Whence comes this unjust favor which gives the Son the privilege of being a cause of the procession of the Spirit while the Spirit, who originated with an equal rank and with equal honor of the same nature is stripped of equal privilege?"<sup>50</sup> As stated above, in order that the Spirit not be stripped of this "equal privilege," the Spirit must also produce a Person, which means that all the Persons of the Trinity become identical and interchangeable in their roles. However, on the anthropological level one may surmise that if the divine Persons are such interchangeable identical units, then the human person made in the image and likeness of God also becomes an interchangeable and thus dispensable, expendable unit – an impersonal number. Could this theology have anything to do with the many problems and dead ends of Western civilization? For example, could it have any relation to the problem of role confusion our society is suffering today, where equality means that all must do and be exactly the same and play the same "equal" role as everyone else? Can society function without diversity of roles? Does difference necessarily mean inequality? Could this view perhaps also point to the problem of Western

society today where the person, instead of being a unique, unrepeatable expression of freedom, has become a number, a mere impersonal cog which must conform to the impersonal machinery of society?

In concluding, one may be able to discern that the *Filioque* is the symptom of a bigger problem. As one may surmise from Photios' arguments, an essence-centered theology in the end is contradictory to the Christian message of God as primarily a Trinitarian, personal, concrete, free, loving God and not a monistic, impersonal, necessary, abstract, philosophical God. In these terms the *Filioque* is indeed not a mere verbal trifle but a way of looking at God, man and all of creation which affects the very nature of the Christian message. In this way, dealing with the *Filioque* question is without a doubt an issue of incalculable "ecumenical, theological and spiritual urgency"<sup>51</sup> for true and complete dialogue between today's Churches.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Fr. Francis Dvornik, a renowned Czech Roman Catholic scholar, has written a multitude of articles and books on the historical dynamics of the Photian controversy; his most representative and classic work is *The Photian Schism*, Cambridge, 1948. On the importance of the Photian controversy for relations between East and West he wrote: "The Photian case is not merely a matter of Byzantine interest. It concerns the history of Christianity and the world, as the appraisal of Photios and his work lies at the core of the controversies that separate Eastern and Western Churches" (*Photian Schism*, 15).

<sup>2</sup> PG 102:263-391. Photios' two other significant works which deal with the theology of the Holy Spirit are his *Encyclical Letter to the Eastern Patriarchs* (PG 102:721-741) and his *Letter to the Archbishop of Akyleia* (PG 102:793-821).

<sup>3</sup> Joseph P. Farrell, *The Mystagogy of the Holy Spirit* (Brookline, MA: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 1987), 18.

<sup>4</sup> His theory of the Trinity is to be found mainly in his works *De Trinitate: Tractatus in Joannis Evangelium* and *Contra Maximum Arianum*.

<sup>5</sup> While for Aristotle the true representation of the reality of an object was

to be found within the material particulars themselves.

<sup>6</sup> Farrell, 20.

<sup>7</sup> See John Zizioulas, *Being as Communion* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1985), 30f., and P. Demetropoulos, "Plato," in *Encyclopedia of Ethics and Religion*, vol. 10, 426 (in Greek).

<sup>8</sup> See Farrell, 22: "As a study of Aristotelian logic and physics, this subordination is classic: the One has absolutely no distinctions; the *Nous* has one distinction, that of being caused by the One, and the World-soul has two distinctions, those of being caused by two different types of causes." Also, *ibid.*, 23: "If because of its simplicity, all acts of the One are acts of Its essence, then how are we to distinguish between Its all-encompassing simplicity and the very particulars which, by logical contrast to it, define it? In other words, there is nothing to keep one from pantheism if the definition of simplicity is accepted as a definition of divine essence; for once any particular is asserted, it immediately collapses back into an indistinguishable unity with the One, its creator. On the other hand, once being, causal activity, and will have been identified, because of that very simplicity, then what is to keep one from affirming the eternity of particulars and multiplying these particulars to any number of beings, each causing, with the One, the being immediately subordinate to it? Once simplicity is asserted, it must, if it is to remain what it is, collapse into potentially infinite series of Ones, as in the system of Iamblichos."

<sup>9</sup> Farrell, 27.

<sup>10</sup> On the monarchy of the Father see Zizioulas, 40f. Markos Orphanos, "The Procession of the Holy Spirit According to St. Photios," *Theologia* 50 (1979), 61 (in Greek); Vasileios Gioultzes, *Interpersonal Relations According to St. Photios* (Thessaloniki: n.p. 1974), 26, note 2 (in Greek); Nikos Nissiotis, "The Importance of the Trinity Doctrine for Interpreting the Origin of Contemporary Deviations in Dogmatic Theology and Church Life," in *La Signification et l'Actualité du Ier Concile Oecuménique pour le Monde Chrétien d'Aujourd'hui, Études Théologiques de Chambessy* 2 (1982), 467f.; and John Meyendorff, *Catholicity and the Church* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1983), 18.

<sup>11</sup> Farrell, 41.

<sup>12</sup> Michael Azkoul, "St. Photios and the Filioque," in *On the Mystagogy of the Holy Spirit* (Long Island, NY: Studion Publishers, Inc., 1983), 9.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 10.

<sup>14</sup> It is interesting and ironic to note that St. Augustine's intent in writing his *De Trinitate* was certainly not to impose a new theology on the Church. He was dissatisfied with this work and was not ready to publish it when the manuscript was stolen by friends and published without his permission. Characteristically he ends this work with the following

prayer: "O Lord the One God, God the Trinity, whatsoever I have said in these books is of you, may those that are yours acknowledge; whatsoever of myself alone, do you and yours forgive," from *The Trinity*, trans. Edmund Hill (Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 1991), 437.

<sup>15</sup> Alcuin, a constant reader of Augustine, Charlemagne's friend, and court theologian who was the mind behind the Carolingian Renaissance, wrote his *De fide Sanctae et individuae Trinitatis* in 862. It came to be considered the dogmatic handbook of the time in Western Europe. This work was heavily based on Augustine's *De Trinitate*. See Richard Haugh, *Photius and the Carolingians: The Trinitarian Controversy* (Belmont, MA: Nordland Publishing, 1975), 60-62, and Azkoul, 11.

<sup>16</sup> PG 102:341. The English translations used here are either from Haugh, Farrell or *The Mystagogy of the Holy Spirit* (Long Island, NY: Studion Publishers, 1983), depending on where I felt they best rendered the original Greek text as found in Migne.

<sup>17</sup> PG 102:284.

<sup>18</sup> PG 102:317.

<sup>19</sup> PG 102:288.

<sup>20</sup> PG 102:289, 317.

<sup>21</sup> PG 102:284.

<sup>22</sup> PG 102:320.

<sup>23</sup> PG 102:313.

<sup>24</sup> PG 102:313.

<sup>25</sup> PG 102:292, 321.

<sup>26</sup> PG 102:321.

<sup>27</sup> PG 102:289.

<sup>28</sup> In Canon I of the Second Council at Lyons convened by the Roman Catholic Church in 1274, which declared the *Filioque* as an official dogma of the Western Church, it is clear that the bishops present perceived the danger of ditheism inherent in the *Filioque* clause and that they avoided this problem by defining the essence as the one principle in the Godhead. Otherwise the following quote from that canon is unexplainable: "We firmly profess that the Holy Ghost proceeds *eternally* from the Father and the Son, not as from two principles but *as from one principle*, not as by two spirations but *as by a single spiration*" (italics are mine), from Denzinger, *Enchiridion*, no. 460, quoted in Philip Hughes, *The Church in Crisis: A History of the General Councils 325-1870* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1964), 240.

<sup>29</sup> PG 102:321.

<sup>30</sup> PG 102:288, 312, 314, 320, 321.

<sup>31</sup> PG 102:288, 289, 293, 295, 321.

<sup>32</sup> PG 102:321.

<sup>33</sup> PG 102:289.

<sup>34</sup> PG 102:288, 289.

<sup>35</sup> The origin of this work is directly related to the Photian controversy and the involvement of the Franks in Bulgaria. Because of this incursion of the Franks and their expelling of the original Byzantine missionaries who were serving there and their subsequent imposition of the *Filioque* and condemning of Byzantine practices, the Byzantines refused to allow papal legates to enter from Bulgaria into Byzantine territory in 867. They were instead handed a condemnatory letter from the Emperor to Boris of Bulgaria as well as a list of Byzantine charges against the Franks which were in turn given to the Pope. In response Pope Nicholas I commissioned Hincmar of Rheims to enlist various theologians to draft a reply to the Byzantines. The result was a work by Aeneas, bishop of Paris, a conciliar statement of the Council of Worms (868), which decreed that Augustine's authority alone is sufficient against the heretical Byzantines, and this work by Ratramnus who was a monk at the monastery of Corbie. For an analysis of these Carolingian works see Haugh, 101-121. Which of these actually reached Photios' attention is unknown, but his arguments in the *Mystagogy* seem to betray at least an indirect knowledge of Ratramnus' work.

<sup>36</sup> PG 102:328, 329, 332.

<sup>37</sup> PG 102:372-373.

<sup>38</sup> PG 102:388.

<sup>39</sup> PG 102:333.

<sup>40</sup> PG 102:300,301.

<sup>41</sup> PG 102:312.

<sup>42</sup> PG 102: 360-361.

<sup>43</sup> PG 102:360.

<sup>44</sup> PG 102:360.

<sup>45</sup> PG 102:352-353.

<sup>46</sup> PG 102:335, 357.

<sup>47</sup> PG 102:349, 352.

<sup>48</sup> PG 102:813.

<sup>49</sup> See John Zizioulas, "The Being of God and of Man," *Synaxi* 37 (1991), 15-17, for a description of the relation of Augustinian theology with subsequent Western history. See also John Meyendorff, *Catholicity and the Church* (Crestwood NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1983), 34; Joseph Farrell, *The Mystagogy of the Holy Spirit*, (Brookline, MA: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 1987), 24-25.

<sup>50</sup> PG 102:317.

<sup>51</sup> Farrell, 50.

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## **Old Testament *Questions* of Theodoret of Cyrus**

ROBERT C. HILL

Of the major figures of the school of Antioch, if we may use that term,<sup>1</sup> Theodoret (later bishop of Cyrus) receives less attention than its earlier more celebrated, even notorious, members. This may be due to the fact that it was not he but John Chrysostom and Theodore (later bishop of Mopsuestia) who had as their mentor in the asketerion of Antioch the later bishop of Tarsus, Diodore,<sup>2</sup> who can claim to be the founder of that school's method of exegesis.<sup>3</sup> It may also, or instead, be due to the attention, often hostile, directed to Diodore and Theodore by critics like Cyril of Alexandria and Leontius of Byzantium, and the condemnation of their works by a synod of Constantinople in 499 and the fifth ecumenical council of 553, respectively. That neglect would be a pity, since the bishop of Cyrus also played a significant role in Church life at the time, representing the oriental bishops in the formulation of the Symbol of Union in 433 and in the convocation of the fourth council at Chalcedon in 451, which has been styled the triumph of Antiochene Christology.<sup>4</sup> More to the point of this essay, Theodoret's juniority also obscures the fact that as a biblical commentator he alone of that school has left us an extant corpus of commentary ('exegesis' being perhaps too pretentious a term)<sup>5</sup> on almost the whole of the Old Testament that illustrates the tenets of the Antiochene approach to ἡ θεῖα Γραφή and its distinctive hermeneutic. His typically



“modéré”<sup>6</sup> treatment of the biblical text and of the opinions of his predecessors secured for his efforts an exemption from the fate that was meted out to works by earlier commentators in that school. Photius, patriarch of Constantinople in the ninth century, who was not above faulting the latter, conceded of Theodoret that, “on the whole, he reached the top level of exegetes.”<sup>7</sup>

### THE *QUESTIONS* A LATE WORK OF THEODORET’S

Despite his many commitments as bishop of a see 100 kms northeast of Antioch that, if styled “a little backwater,”<sup>8</sup> included 800 parishes, Theodoret could claim in a letter to Eusebius of Ancyra in 448 to have produced works on “all the prophets, the psalter and the apostle.”<sup>9</sup> Missing from that corpus is any mention of work on the Gospels, which (out of deference to Chrysostom’s egregious commentaries?) he seems never to have attempted, and on the Torah and Former Prophets of the Hebrew Bible, on which his Antiochene predecessors have left us some remains, mostly fragmentary.<sup>10</sup> Undeterred by failing health in the years before his death around 460, Theodoret acknowledges the encouragement of a certain Hypatius, apparently a coadjutor, to bring the work of Old Testament commentary to completion with two series of *Questions* on “what appear to be problems, ζητήματα,” in the Octateuch (Genesis to Ruth) and in Kingdoms and Chronicles (1 Samuel to 2 Chronicles). In choosing this genre in place of verse-by-verse commentary, he was following in the path of commentators in the East (not only on biblical texts but also on classical poets like Homer, “la source inépuisable d’apories”)<sup>11</sup> from Aristotle to Philo to Eusebius of Caesarea and on to Photius (who acknowledged Theodoret’s effort under the title Εἰς τὰ ἄπορα τῆς Γραφῆς), and in the West Jerome, Augustine and medieval authors like Peter Abelard.

Theodoret had not employed this genre before in treating of “all the (Latter) prophets, the psalter and the apostle” plus his exegetical first fruits, the Song of Songs, where his aim had been “to bring obscurity to clarity,” as he says of that earliest work.<sup>12</sup> His choice of the *Questions* genre in this case was motivated perhaps partly by his failing health, and also by the particular challenge of the material. Though he concedes only that these books contain “*what appear to be problems*,” Genesis and the others did prompt bewilderment on the part of some readers and blasphemous criticism by adversaries such as the Marcionites, and so called for the selective focus allowed by this genre.<sup>13</sup> There was also the fact that in the case of one of these biblical books, Ruth, there may have been some readers who held doubts of its canonicity (as the first question on it betrays), while the Chronicles (mere “leftovers,” Παράλειπόμενα, in the terminology of the Seventy translators) had escaped, and would continue to escape commentary by any other of the Fathers – perhaps the reason why Theodoret, with no predecessor to suggest key questions for response, lapses into continuous commentary on these books.

The result of this lengthy series of ζητήματα καὶ λύσεις, where an aging commentator in poor health is nevertheless undaunted by the magnitude of the task, is a work (or two works, if one notes the provision of a fresh preface to Kingdoms and Chronicles) that runs to 186,000 words in translation. The only latitude Theodoret allows himself towards the end is in excusing himself from repeating what he has written before in his final prophetic commentary (on Jeremiah) on the reigns of Jehoahaz, Jehoiakim, Jehoiachin and Zedekiah: “The story of the remaining kings the prophet Jeremiah reported in many places. For our part, since we commented on that book as well, thanks to divine grace, we have presumed it superfluous to comment on it again.” Photius in a later century conceded that the work measures

up to its title, and that “for the most part the book is helpful” – a rather grudging estimate by a reserved assessor of Antiochene scholarship. For modern scholars its value lies in various areas: in the biblical text that Theodoret is reading; in his overall approach to Scripture as emerging from this work; in the critical positions he adopts on Octateuchal composers as well as the Deuteronomist and Chronicler vis-à-vis our positions today; in the Antiochene hermeneutic applied to these composers’ oral and written works; and less so in Christological, trinitarian and other theological accents of the commentator. In these many areas Theodoret’s *Questions* represent an achievement that is, *pace* Photius, more than simply χρήσιμον.

#### THE TEXT OF THE *QUESTIONS* AND THEODORET’S BIBLICAL TEXT

We are fortunate to be able to read both parts of the work, which has come to us in direct manuscript tradition, in a critical edition by the eminent Septuagint scholar Natalio Fernández Marcos and his colleagues.<sup>14</sup> Fernández Marcos undertook the task of editing the work with the express purpose of discerning the degree to which it exhibits signs of a peculiarly Antiochene (or Lucianic) recension as distinct from other forms of the LXX, whose existence has been acknowledged at least from the time of Jerome.<sup>15</sup> The conclusion regarding the Octateuch is, in short, that “at least a typically Antiochene text emerges in the last three books,” and that this is true also, as was suspected, of the text of *Kingdoms* being read by Theodoret, where “a single, uniform text with very clear textual characteristics” appears.<sup>16</sup> A translator (like the present writer) notes distinctive readings in Theodoret’s biblical text, while being aware also that in the Greek version of the book of Judges, the families of manuscripts associated with Codex Alexandrinus and Codex

Vaticanus differ from each other.

Despite claims one occasionally reads to the contrary, Theodoret was (like his Antiochene fellows, and all other Fathers except Jerome) unable to read Hebrew,<sup>17</sup> and so was at the mercy of this local LXX text before him. Should a “questioner” (if we engage in a willing suspension of disbelief regarding the source of the ζητήματα) raise an issue involving use of a Hebrew term, the commentator is left to rationalize. The LXX text of Exodus 22:28(27) outlawing blasphemy reads, “You shall not revile gods, θεούς,” prompting Q.51 about the force of the plural; the commentator could have solved the issue quite simply had he been able to comment on Hebrew usage in the case of *’elohim*, here wrongly rendered in the plural by the LXX, but he chooses to cite the more difficult case of Psalms 82:1 where the gods of the nations are referred to, insisting that in both cases the plural is appropriate since “judges” is intended. When the questioner asks about the meaning of the form νωκηδαι (an obscure Hebrew term simply transliterated by a puzzled LXX) for the occupation of King Mesha of Moab in 2 Kings 3:4, which is thought to mean “augurer” but often rendered “sheep breeder,”<sup>18</sup> Theodoret can only check with the alternative versions associated with the names Aquila, Symmachus and Theodotion, and then with the context.

The other translators rendered νωκηδαι as chief shepherd. The sequel makes things clear: “He used to pay a tax to the king of Israel of a hundred thousand lambs and a hundred thousand unshorn rams.”

A copy of the Hexapla made available to him another LXX form as well as those alternative versions, to which he has recourse more frequently on Kingdoms and Chronicles. On those books he turns also to the *Onomasticon* of Eusebius of Caesarea, to a lexicon of Hebrew terms, and to an obscure translator named Josephus (not the historian, who also is at his

elbow) in his typical anxiety to leave no question unanswered (even if of his own asking). His acquaintance with Syriac, his mother tongue, an asset in other commentaries, he invokes rarely here – for example, in throwing light on the dialectal diversity in the pronunciation of Hebrew *shibboleth* in the incident in Judges 12:4-6 where Jephthah detects fugitives of Ephraim by that ruse. Within his limits, then, Theodoret (unlike Theodore, e.g.) is a tireless researcher.

#### THEODORET'S HANDLING OF A NEW GENRE

It is as well that he is conscientious. The *Questions* genre allows a commentator the possibility of dodging the more difficult questions, of catering simply to the idly inquisitive, and of pandering to those with an interest in the sensational or the salacious. Theodoret does not exploit this latitude, generally attending to the major concerns a reader of his time may have had about this challenging part of the Bible. We do note that he does not comment on items of the Decalogue beyond the first three, or share the interest of the composers of Joshua in lists of kings and allotments of land. Debate about Solomon's age at his death, in response to Q.32 on 1 Kings 11 involving reference to the figure cited by Flavius Josephus in *Jewish Antiquities*, leads to no comment on the momentous division of the kingdom that ensued. And we regret the brevity of reference to the fall of Samaria to Shalmaneser V in 722 and consequent deportation of the northern tribes in 2 Kings 17. But for this commentator there is no shirking difficult passages that are obscure even in the Hebrew, like the poem in Deuteronomy 33. The bishop naturally has an interest, like The Chronicler, in things liturgical. An apparently ingenuous Question 60 on Exodus, "Why on earth did God order the tabernacle to be made?" is a cue for a comprehensive account of the design and furnishings of the tabernacle together with the

accoutrements of the priests described in Exodus 25-29, just as he gives free rein to Antiochene ἀκριβεία in pursuing details of the origin and measurements of materials in the building of the Temple in 1Kings 7-10.<sup>19</sup> On the other hand, texts that might seem sensational, like the sun's stopping in its course in Joshua 10:12-13 or the angelic vengeance meted out to Sennacherib's troops in 2 Kings 19:35, do not attract particular attention.

Does that mean that modern scholars would concur with Theodoret's appreciation of the process of composition of the complicated texts of Torah and Former Prophets? *A priori*, that is unlikely: these terms from the Hebrew Bible are no more familiar to him than Deuteronomist or Chronicler. The term Octateuch, used in the early Church for the Bible's first eight books,<sup>20</sup> does not occur in his mouth; yet the grouping is evidently customary for him, whereas a pentateuchal collection is not: he moves from Deuteronomy to Joshua without comment on Deuteronomy 34, which records the death of Moses and the mystery surrounding his tomb, and without remark on any change of authorship. His prefatory remarks include no general introductory comments on the literary and theological unity of the first corpus or on questions of authorship such as might be found in a modern treatment, and the same is true of the preface to Kingdoms and Chronicles – and, it might be added, to his Commentary on Paul's letters.<sup>21</sup> His exegetical priorities, therefore, are similar to those of Chrysostom in his homilies and sermons on Genesis,<sup>22</sup> namely, that Scripture is very much a moral and hagiographical text; the inclusion of Ruth in the canon is justified on the following grounds (beyond its Christological import), “This narrative is sufficient of itself to offer great benefit to those who realize the kind of benefit accruing from it” – χρήσιμον in Photius' terminology.

### THEODORET'S POSITION ON OCTATEUCH, KINGDOMS AND CHRONICLES

Theodoret's more critical modern counterparts would doubtless note features of the commentary that differ from theirs. Even less than Chrysostom does he notice the occurrence, let alone the different character, of a second story of creation in Genesis.<sup>23</sup> He is slow to recognize a cultic rather than simply pragmatic basis for the numerous directives in Leviticus. The significance for an adequate morality of Exodus 20:2, "I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt...", at the head of the apodictic commandments of the Decalogue is not acknowledged (as likewise many moralists today fail to acknowledge it, admittedly).<sup>24</sup> On the other hand, he is astute enough to recognize the creation story as a later reflection of a theological as well as factual nature that takes account of and refines earlier efforts from the ancient Near East.

Since Egyptians used to make a god of visible creation, and in living among them for a long time Israel had contracted this impiety, he necessarily proposes to them the facts of creation and openly teaches that it had a beginning to its existence and that it had the God of all as its creator. Not that he passed over a treatment of true doctrine of God (θεολογία): the statement that heaven and earth and the other parts of creation were made and the revelation that the God of all is their creator provided as well a true doctrine of God sufficient for people of the time.

We might find, nevertheless, that the commentator's constant efforts to salvage David's reputation represent a failure to appreciate the warts-and-all portrait of this flawed instrument of divine purposes by the Deuteronomist.

We are not surprised, of course, that in their time Theodoret and his peers did not arrive at a document hypothesis for the Pentateuch such as that developed by the followers of

Julius Wellhausen in a later age. It is true that Moses as author of those books is presented here in various literary roles (beyond lawgiver, νομοθέτης) – as inspired author, προφήτης, like the psalmist and (Latter) prophets, as simple composer (not necessarily uninspired), συγγραφεύς, as historian/chronicler/annalist, ιστοριογράφος – which might be taken as a code implying a somewhat similar concept of multiple authorship. There are times, too, when the distinctively anthropomorphic character of a Yahwist affects this eastern commentator; he has to deny that Moses could have seen God, as is claimed in Exodus 33:16-23, or that the Lord and accompanying angels ate a meal in the tent of Abraham in Genesis 18. But the many textual discrepancies that give rise to questions in a precise Antiochene rarely elicit responses hinting at diversity of authorship: there are more curses than blessings in Deuteronomy 27-28, not because of an interpolation or the impact of the exile on a Deuteronomistic editor, but because “promises of freedom do not benefit wicked servants to the same extent as threats of chastisement;” Balaam’s changes of heart in Numbers 22-24 are not due to any difference in authorship. Likewise, Theodoret does not arrive at an acknowledgement of individual contributions of a Deuteronomist and a Chronicler in the second corpus, implying instead by consistent use of the terms συγγραφεύς and ιστοριογράφος for these authors in place of προφήτης that their work was less original, perhaps requiring a lower level of participation in the charism of inspiration. He is in accord with the choice by the LXX of Παραλειπόμενα, “leftovers,” as a (“somewhat derogatory and non-theological”) title,<sup>25</sup> failing to recognize a distinctive theology in the work of The Chronicler.

## AN ANTIOCHENE INTERPRETATION

The commentator on any text, sacred or profane, who



fails to appreciate the complexity of its composition or the contribution of a range of authors is also in danger of mediating to his readers a less than adequate interpretation. Though he had not sat at Diodore's feet like Chrysostom and Theodore, Theodoret had evidently accepted the typically Antiochene accent on τὸ ἱστορικόν in biblical hermeneutics. "It is necessary to adhere to the facts (ἀλήθεια) of the divine Scripture,"<sup>26</sup> he says in weighing up various interpretations of the parting of the sea in response to Q.25 on Exodus 14:22; and in his interpretation of the plagues in that book he could not be said to be bent on disabusing his readers of literalist views. The Fall scene in Genesis 3 is also taken at the literal level, as can be seen in his response to Q.32 about the serpent speaking to Eve, the only suggestion of metaphor being in the devil's adopting the guise of a serpent. Yet the commentator can remind his readers that "the bare text" is not an adequate basis for arriving at the author's full meaning: the Lord's threat in Exodus 20:5 to punish children of idolators to the fourth generation should be interpreted, he says, not solely by reference to τὸ γυμνὸν γράμμα, but by an intertextual approach invoking Ezekiel 18. There can be levels of meaning in a text, he assures his readers in responding to Q.26 on Genesis when questioned about the way to interpret the trees in the garden: they are real trees, but they also signify something further.

The divine Scripture said that they also sprouted from the ground, so they do not have a different nature from the other plants: just as the tree of the Cross is a tree and is called saving on account of the salvation gained by faith in it, so these trees also were products of the soil. By divine decree one was called "tree of life," the other on account of the experience of sin occurring in connection with it was named "tree of the knowledge of good and evil" ... Likewise baptism is called living water, not because the water of baptism has a different nature, but because through

that water divine grace makes a gift of eternal life.

The interpretation moves from the literal to the eschatological, spiritual and sacramental.<sup>27</sup>

This hermeneutical range is required by Theodoret in addressing octateuchal material because of the need he feels to endorse institutions and practices of Judaism at one time, and at another to disallow or reinterpret them. The prescriptions in the book of Leviticus in particular call for this flexibility: the treatment of leprosy by priests prescribed in Leviticus 14:15-18 is transposed to the level of contemporary Church practice regarding public sinners: "The person who remained leprous, of course, continued to live outside the camp, just as the sinner who remained unrepentant is expelled from the Church." The saving effects on the people and on individuals of cultic prescriptions and heroic feats outlined in the Octateuch lend themselves readily to interpretation in a typological manner, of which even Antiochene commentators take frequent advantage. Even in Kingdoms and Chronicles the story from the Elijah cycle of the widow of Zarephath (Q.47 on 1 Kings 17) could be taken similarly, Theodoret felt: "My view is that in her the Church from the nations was prefigured: in faith she welcomed the fugitive from the Israelites, just as the Church also accepted the apostles when driven out by those same people." Christian liturgical practice had doubtless already adopted this style of reading the text. If this hermeneutic gave rise to uneasiness in Antiochene readers/listeners (as Chrysostom admits it did),<sup>28</sup> even when the word "allegory" itself is not cited, Theodoret can and does claim the support of "the divine apostle" in 1 Corinthians 10:2-4, as in Q.27 on Exodus.

The old realities were a type of the new: the Law of Moses was the shadow, grace the body. So since the Egyptians pursued the Hebrews, and by crossing the Red Sea they

were freed from the harsh domination of the Egyptians, the sea represents a type of bath, the cloud the Spirit, Moses Christ the savior, the rod the Cross, Pharaoh the devil, the Egyptians the demons, the manna divine nourishment, and the water from the rock the saving blood.

It is not allegory in the style that Antioch (in the person of Diodore) took to be Origen's, because τὸ ἱστορικόν is still preferred to τὸ ἀλληγορικόν and not undermined by it (as Diodore required of the process of θεωρία),<sup>29</sup> and in fact is given precedence. It is on this basis that Theodoret quotes 1 Corinthians 10 again at the opening of comment on Joshua, where he claims to see Moses and Joshua acting as types, citing also Galatians 4:24, where Paul admitted to use of allegory in paralleling Hagar and Sarah to the earthly and heavenly Jerusalems. Aware that Diodore, concerned about Alexandrian-style allegory, had corrected Paul on use of the term, Theodoret explains, "(Paul) wrote this, not to exclude the factual basis, but to compare the type to the reality." He himself will reject that other style of allegory in pejorative reference to the interpretation of the clothing of skins as the human body in Genesis 3:21 by the ἀλληγορηταί, probably with Origen and Didymus in mind; nowhere else does he refer specifically to this style of interpretation.

### THEODORET'S ACHIEVEMENT IN THE *QUESTIONS*

It is clear that the liturgy of Theodoret's church had already determined that Christological significance is often found in octateuchal texts. Ruth's rightful place in the canon, we noted, was established on these grounds, as Matthew's genealogy of Jesus confirmed. Any hesitant readers of the Torah could be encouraged to read this Jewish material on the grounds that, as Theodoret says in Q.76 on Genesis, "that race was the object of this care for the reason that Christ the Lord, the only-begotten Son of God, was destined to spring

from it according to the flesh.” The ritual of the scapegoat (ἀποπομπᾶιος) and the sacrificed goat in Leviticus 16, which is introduced as a codicil to Q.22, receives lengthy linguistic and theological clarification simply because Jesus is in focus.<sup>30</sup> Yet, perhaps because Theodoret was reading his predecessors’ interpretation through the lens of Diodore (as Guinot documents), there is no overall attempt in this work to turn the Torah into a Christian text, or to hunt for traces of Christian dogma. Rarely do elements of Trinitarian thinking strike the commentator.

Such traces and other accents of a theological nature, like the question of the creation of the angels, which receives lengthy treatment, are best left to another study. Here the focus has been on Theodoret as commentator on two large sections of the Old Testament, and specifically on his adoption of an unaccustomed genre for commentary on them, the *Questions*. We can agree that Photius was less than generous in conceding the work – which despite the author’s failing health runs to such length, and includes unique patristic commentaries on Ruth and Chronicles – to be simply “helpful.” Apart from its value to us for surviving in its entirety, unlike the octateuchal fragments from earlier Antiochene commentators Diodore and Theodore, and extending beyond Chrysostom’s Genesis homilies and sermons, it represents a comprehensive and always serious attempt to “make clear to the readers what requires clarification,” while “introducing nothing foreign into the divine Scripture.” It largely avoids the principal hazard of the genre, that of shirking comment on principal issues of the text or settling for irrelevant or sensational detail. The author’s critical positions are those of his time, predictably; only slowly does he come to acknowledge complexity in the narrative and diversity of authorship in the Octateuch, and the Deuteronomist’s purpose and the Chronicler’s theology generally elude him. Yet his peers, whom he surveys

respectfully, suffered from the same exegetical limitations without leaving us his balanced coverage of such an extensive section of the Old Testament, which is interpreted in the best Antiochene fashion, eschewing a hermeneutic based solely on τὸ γυμνὸν γράμμα while not taking refuge in allegory. After consulting his work, Theodoret's readers doubtless felt that "what appear to be problems" in this large part of Scripture are only that.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Though we do find J. Quasten, *Patrology* II (Westminster, MD: Newman, 1953), pp. 121-23, speaking in a local and physical sense of "the school of Antioch founded by Lucian of Samosata" in opposition to the "school of Caesarea," Origen's refuge after his exile from Egypt, we prefer to use the term only of a fellowship of like-minded scholars joined by birth, geography and scholarly principles, even if some members did exercise a magisterial role in regard to others.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Socrates Scholasticus, *Historia Ecclesiastica* 6, 3 (PG 67.665-68).

<sup>3</sup> Cf. J.-M. Olivier, *Diodori Tarsensis Commentarii in Psalmos* I, *Commentarii in Psalmos I-L*, CCG 6, (Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols, 1980), ciii, who, while conceding to Lucian of Samosata the role of "l'initiateur" of the Antiochene exegetical method, claims for Diodore the role of "le véritable fondateur."

<sup>4</sup> Cf. J. N. D. Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines*, 5th ed, (New York: Harper & Row, 1978), p. 341. For a fuller summary of Theodoret's life and works, see J.-N. Guinot, "Theodoret von Kyrrhos," *TRE* 33.250-54.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. Kelly, *Golden Mouth: The Story of John Chrysostom, Ascetic, Preacher, Bishop*, (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1995), p. 94: "Neither John, nor any Christian teacher for centuries to come, was properly equipped to carry out exegesis as we have come to understand it."

<sup>6</sup> The compliment is paid Theodoret by G. Bardy, "Interprétation chez les pères," *DBS* IV, p. 582, who proceeds to say that for future ages he was "le noyau ou le terme de comparaison indispensable."

<sup>7</sup> *Bibliotheca* 203 (PG 105.676), a work in which by contrast Photius rates Theodore's writings as extremely tautological, lacking charm, unpleasing, short on clarity.

<sup>8</sup> F. M. Young, *From Nicaea to Chalcedon: A Guide to the Literature and its Background*, (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983), p. 267.

<sup>9</sup> Y. Azéma, ed., *Théodoret de Cyr. Correspondance* II (SC 98.202).

<sup>10</sup> Guinot, *L'Exégèse de Théodoret de Cyr*, Théologie historique 100, (Paris: Beauchesne, 1995), pp. 748-99, documents Theodoret's considerable indebtedness to Diodore's Questions on the Octateuch, fragments of which are collected in R. Devreesse, *Les anciens commentateurs grecs de l'Octateuch et des Rois*, Studi e Testi 201, (Città del Vaticano: Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, 1959). Devreesse also includes fragments of commentary on some pentateuchal material by Theodore in *Essai sur Théodore de Mopsueste*, Studi e Testi 141, (Città del Vaticano: Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, 1948), pp. 5-27.

<sup>11</sup> Cf. G. Bardy, "La littérature patristique des '*Quaestiones et responsiones*' sur l'Écriture sainte," *RB* 41 (1932), 210-36, 341-69, 515-37; 42 (1933) 11-30, 211-29, 328-52. The phrase comes from art. cit., 41 (1932) 211.

<sup>12</sup> PG 81.212.

<sup>13</sup> Cf. Theodoret's preface: "Not all inquirers (into this part of the Bible) share the same purpose: some inquire with ill-will, believing they find the divine Scripture wanting, in some cases for not teaching right doctrine, in other cases for giving conflicting instructions; others by contrast search in a spirit of learning, longing to find what is sought."

<sup>14</sup> N. Fernández Marcos and A. Sáenz-Badillos, *Theodoretī Cyrensis Quaestiones in Octateuchum*, Textos y Estudios "Cardenal Cisneros" vol. 17, (Madrid: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, 1979); Fernández Marcos and J. R. Busto Saiz, *Theodoretī Cyrensis Quaestiones in Reges et Paralipomena*, Textos y Estudios "Cardenal Cisneros" vol. 32, 1984.

<sup>15</sup> Jerome speaks of three forms of the LXX current in his time (*Praef. in Paral.*; PL 28.1324-25), referring to the Constantinople-Antioch form as "another version which Origen and Eusebius of Caesarea and all the Greek commentators call the popular text, and which by most is called the Lucianic text" (*Ep.* 106, 2; PL 22.838). Not all agree on the provenance of this Antioch text: P. Kahle, *The Cairo Genizah*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., (Oxford: Blackwell, 1959), pp. 256-57, argues that a translation distinct from that of Alexandria called Septuagint was earlier developed in Antioch, and was revised by Lucian in the third century (Lucian's lack of Hebrew relegating him to the role of reviser, in the view of S. Jellicoe, *The Septuagint and Modern Study*, (Oxford: Clarendon, 1968), pp. 160-61). Fernández Marcos, on the other hand, *The Septuagint in Context: Introduction to the Greek Versions of the Bible*, Eng. trans., (Boston-Leiden: Brill, 2001), p. 54, does not accept Kahle's proposal of a number of Greek translations like the many Aramaic targums, though still admitting that "the Septuagint is not a translation but a 'collection of translations'" (xi, 22).

<sup>16</sup> *The Septuagint in Context*, pp. 229-30.

<sup>17</sup> Evidence from his OT commentaries would confirm the description of Theodoret as “bilingue” by P. Canivet, *Histoire d’une entreprise apolo-gétique au Ve siècle*, (Paris: Bloud & Gay, 1957), pp. 26-27, Syriac being his mother tongue and Greek his “langue de culture.” As to the degree of Origen’s familiarity with Hebrew, Henri Crouzel concedes, *Origen*, Eng. trans. (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1989), p. 12: “Certainly it would be wrong to credit Origen with a knowledge of Hebrew like Jerome’s, but he must have had enough to direct the compilation of the *Hexapla*, even if the actual work was done by some assistant.”

<sup>18</sup> Cf. J. Gray, *I & II Kings*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed., Old Testament Library, (London: SCM, 1977), p. 482, who sees the sequel that Theodoret cites to be a gloss on the obscure term, which thus undoes him (and even modern versions like the NRSV).

<sup>19</sup> Admittedly, there are a goodly number of questions that seize upon insignificant items or false conundrums (*dissonantia* in Abelard’s term), like Q.3 on Exodus asking how Pharaoh’s daughter knew that baby Moses was a Hebrew (through circumcision, the commentator retorts, since it was a distinctively Hebrew practice, in his misinformed view).

<sup>20</sup> Cf. Otto Eissfeldt, *The Old Testament: An Introduction*, Eng. trans. (Oxford: Blackwell, 1965), p. 156.

<sup>21</sup> Cf. R. C. Hill, *Theodoret of Cyrus: Commentary on the Letters of St Paul I*, (Brookline, MA: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 2001), p. 9.

<sup>22</sup> The homilies are found in PG 53; 54, and the sermons have been critically edited by L. Brottier, *Jean Chrysostome: Sermons sur la Genèse*, SC 433, 1998.

<sup>23</sup> Cf. Chrysostom, Homily 12 on Genesis (PG 53.99): “The Holy Spirit, after all, in his foreknowledge of future events, wishes to prevent anyone’s being able to engage in controversy later on, and in opposition to Sacred Scripture to set notions from their own reasoning against the dogmas of the Church; so now again, after teaching us the order of created things, ... accordingly once again he makes mention of all the items one by one to stop the unbridled tongue of people spoiling to make a show of their shamelessness.” (Translation by R. C. Hill, *St John Chrysostom: Homilies on Genesis 1-17*, Fathers of the Church 74, (Washington DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1985), p. 159.)

<sup>24</sup> Biblical theologians observe that it is a pattern in the Scriptures that Gospel precedes law, and that consequently according to biblical morality the moral life represents a response to a divine initiative, not simply obedience to arbitrary edicts.

<sup>25</sup> So R. Braun, *I Chronicles*, Word Biblical Commentary 14, (Waco TX: Word Books, 1986), p. i. Theodoret’s acceptance of this term and his

judgement of the author's lower status are related to his and his peers' notion of prophecy as essentially prospective (cf. my article, "Antiochene Exegesis of the Prophets" *StudP* 39 [2005]). As he says at the opening of commentary on Chronicles, "Anyone composing a history mentions not later events but earlier or contemporary ones; it belongs to prophets to foretell the future."

<sup>26</sup> Cf. C. Schäublin, *Untersuchungen zu Methode und Herkunft der Antiochenischen Exegese*, Theophaneia: Beiträge zur Religions – und Kirchengeschichte des Altertums 23, (Köln-Bonn: Peter Hanstein, 1974), p. 170: "Der Bezug auf die 'Realität', die ἀλήθεια, stellt aber die wohl entscheidende Komponente der antiochenischen 'historischen' Auslegung dar."

<sup>27</sup> Such hermeneutical flexibility on Theodoret's part is at variance with the adherence shown by Theodore, e.g., to the maxims received in his education (via Diodore and Libanius) from the likes of Aristarchus, who by recommending students to "Clarify Homer from Homer" had the effect of inducing Antiochene interpreters to find the full meaning of OT text within the OT. Cf. Schäublin, *Untersuchungen*, pp. 158-67.

<sup>28</sup> Chrysostom suggests that his congregations would not stomach the use of allegory, as he says explicitly in his homilies on Isaiah 6 (SC 277.122): "Those not happy to accept allegories will reject our reference" (to Isaiah 14:14, an allegorical text); and so he has to cite Paul instead. If Theodoret in this work seems to have unusually ready recourse to typology, and even allegory, it is partly because his script has to some extent been written for him by predecessors of that bent in use of this genre, as Bardy explains in, "La littérature patristique," *RB* 42 (1933), p. 224.

<sup>29</sup> In his preface to his Commentary on the Psalms (CCG 6.7), Diodore stated his insistence on beginning with a factual reading of the text (κατὰ τὴν ἱστορίαν), and only then moving to a more elevated sense by a process of θεωρία; bypassing the former resulted not in θεωρία but in ἀλληγορία. Paul Ternant, "La θεωρία d'Antioche dans le cadre de sens de l'Écriture," *Bib* 34 (1953), p. 137, comments, "Par θεωρία Antioche entendait sa propre position, et par ἀλληγορία celle de l'adversaire, i.e., Alexandria."

<sup>30</sup> Our term scapegoat (for escape goat) derives from the Vulgate's *caper emissarius* in response to the ἀποπομπαῖος of the LXX in Leviticus 16:8 where the Hebrew term Azazel appears (NRSV also); scholars like De Vaux believe it is intended in that verse as a proper name parallel to Yahweh there, and probably with demonic reference – an interpretation as old as Julian the Apostate (but too Manichean for the Fathers), earning Theodoret's scorn because of his sense of a Christological parallel. So the ritual of the scapegoat in Leviticus 16:5-10 receives full treatment.



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### **Orthodox-Catholic Dialogue Statements (1998-2000): An Introduction**

The Standing Conference of Canonical Orthodox Bishops and the National Conference of Catholic Bishops established the Orthodox-Roman Catholic Bilateral Theological Consultation in 1965. The Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops became a co-sponsor in 1997. This historic consultation has the distinction of being the first in modern times to bring together the official representatives of the two churches to discuss theological issues within an atmosphere of mutual respect and prayer. With about twelve theologians from both churches, the Consultation has met regularly, usually twice a year, since its inception. Metropolitan Maximos Aghiorgoussis of Pittsburgh currently serves as the Orthodox co-chairman.

The North American Consultation produced twenty-two Agreed Statements between 1965 and 2001. These Statements have addressed a number of historic points of disagreement between the churches and offered insights into the resolution of a number of differences. These Agreed Statements are important contributions to the entire ecumenical movement. At a time when relationships between the churches are strained in some parts of the world, the North American Orthodox-Roman Catholic Consultation has demonstrated the importance of theological dialogue for the restoration of visible unity. The activity of the Consultation also affirms that this dialogue can and must be undertaken in an atmosphere of mutual respect and prayer.

This North American Consultation preceded the International Orthodox-Roman Catholic Theological Dialogue which

was established in 1979. Since its establishment, the International Commission has issued four Agreed Statements. The first three of these in 1992, 1987 and 1988 dealt with topics related to the Eucharist, the Church and the Sacraments. The most recent, in 1993, known as "Uniatism, Method of Union of the Past, and the Present Search for Full Communion," commonly called the *Balamand Statement*, dealt with the difficult topic of Eastern Catholic Churches and their status in the wake of political changes in Eastern Europe especially. Because of the strained relationship between the two churches over this topic since 1989, especially in Eastern Europe, the International Commission did not meet in plenary session until the year 2000 in Baltimore. Despite the outstanding preparation and local witness of Orthodox and Roman Catholics, the International Commission made little progress at that time.

The North American Theological Consultation also provided an important basis for the establishment of the Joint Committee of Orthodox and Roman Catholic Bishops in the United States. Established in 1981, this unique committee brings together each year a number of Orthodox and Roman Catholic bishops for common study, reflection and prayer. The Joint Committee has produced five Statements. The members of the Committee have also made pilgrimages to Rome, Constantinople, Mount Athos and Crete.

***Common Response to the Aleppo Statement  
on the Date of Easter/Pascha***

*North American Orthodox-Catholic  
Theological Consultation  
Washington, DC,  
October 31, 1998*

1. In March 1997, a consultation jointly sponsored by the World Council of Churches and the Middle East Council of Churches, meeting in Aleppo, Syria, issued a statement "Towards a Common Date for Easter." The North American Orthodox-Catholic Theological Consultation, meeting in Washington, DC, October 29-31, 1998, studied this Aleppo Statement and reviewed reactions to it thus far. Our Consultation strongly endorses the Aleppo Statement.

2. The Aleppo Statement rightly calls attention to the centrality of Christ's resurrection as the basis of our common faith. As "the ultimate expression of the Father's gift of reconciliation and unity in Christ through the Spirit," the resurrection "is a sign of the unity and reconciliation which God wills for the entire creation" (paragraph 5). Yet by celebrating the feast of Christ's resurrection, the Holy Pascha, or Easter, on different Sundays in the same year, "the churches give a divided witness" to this mystery, "compromising their credibility and effectiveness in bringing the Gospel to the world" (paragraph 1). The question of the date of Easter/Pascha, therefore, is not simply an academic issue, void of pastoral implications. It is a matter of concern in our own North American context. It has become an even more urgent

issue in some parts of the world such as the Middle East, where Christians constitute a divided minority in a larger non-Christian society.

3. After reviewing twentieth-century discussion of the question of a common date for Easter/Pascha and historical background to present differences of calculation among Christians, the Aleppo Statement recommends:

- maintaining the norms established by the First Ecumenical Council in Nicaea (325 AD), according to which Easter/Pascha should fall on the Sunday following the first full moon of spring, and
- calculating the necessary astronomical data (spring equinox and full moon) by "the most accurate possible scientific means," using the Jerusalem meridian as the basis for reckoning.

4. Noting that in the year 2001 the Paschal calculations now in use in our churches will coincide, the Aleppo Statement also recommends that, in the interval between now and then, the churches study and consider means to implement these recommendations.

5. Our Catholic-Orthodox Consultation welcomes the Aleppo Statement's recommendations for the following reasons:

- The Aleppo Statement does well to call attention to the continuing relevance of the Council of Nicaea – a fundamental point of reference for the traditions of both our churches – and in so doing, to reject proposals to establish a fixed date for Easter/Pascha.
- As the Aleppo Statement points out, the Council of Nicaea was willing to make use of contemporary science to calculate the date of Easter/Pascha. We believe that this principle still holds valid today. Scientific observations about the cosmos reveal the goodness and wonder of God's creation, which He embraced in the Incarnation of His Son. Moreover, to deny an observable truth about the world is to reject God's gift to

us. As they witness to God's love for the world, our churches need to use the findings of contemporary science as did the Fathers of Nicaea.

- The Aleppo Statement accurately presents historical circumstances relating to such matters as the Council of Nicaea's treatment of the relationship between the Christian Pascha and the Jewish Passover. The practice of continuing to celebrate Pascha according to the ancient Julian calendar has often been defended, by some Eastern Christians, as resting on a decision associated with that council prohibiting the churches from celebrating the Paschal feast "with the Jews." As scholars of both our traditions have very clearly demonstrated, this prohibition was directed against making the calculation of the date of Easter depend upon contemporary Jewish reckoning, not against a coincidence of date between the two festivals. In fact, a coincidence of Passover and Easter dates continued to occur from time to time as late as the eighth century. Only later, when the increasing "lag" of the Julian Calendar made any coincidence impossible, did the prohibition come to be misinterpreted as meaning that the Jewish Passover must necessarily precede the Christian Passover each year.

- In short, we consider that the implementation of the recommendations of the Aleppo Statement would allow our churches to adhere more exactly to the mode of calculation mandated by the First Council of Nicaea.

6. As the Aleppo Statement indicates, its recommendations will have different implications for our churches "as they seek a renewed faithfulness to Nicaea." For the Eastern churches, "changes in the actual dating of Easter/Pascha will be more perceptible than for the Western churches" (paragraph 13). The fact that the recommendations of the Aleppo Statement substantially repeat proposals already developed by the Orthodox themselves in connection with their preparations for a Great and Holy Council of the Orthodox Church

should significantly enhance the Aleppo recommendations' prospects for success. At the same time, as the Aleppo Statement notes, in many of the Eastern churches adherence to their present method of calculation often has been a symbol of the Church's integrity and freedom from the hostile forces of this world. Implementation of the Aleppo recommendations in these circumstances must proceed carefully and with great pastoral sensitivity. The material presented in the Aleppo Statement can be of great help to these churches should they attempt to carry out this effort to be faithful to the great tradition of the Church.

7. The Aleppo Statement is faithful to the decisions of the First Ecumenical Council regarding the date of Easter/Pascha. At the same time, it takes into account the contemporary situation, which calls for a common witness to the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ, the central mystery of the Christian faith. Our consultation therefore urges our churches to give serious consideration to its recommendations.

## SHARING THE MINISTRY OF RECONCILIATION

### ***Statement on the Orthodox-Catholic Dialogue and the Ecumenical Movement***

*The North American Orthodox-Catholic  
Theological Consultation  
Brookline, Massachusetts  
June 1, 2000*

### **The Ministry of Reconciliation**

Christ our Lord has called us to be His disciples through the life of His Church and for the sake of His world. By our baptism, we are united with Christ and with all those who are in Christ. By this mystery which unites our life with Him, we receive the gift of the Holy Spirit and come to know the Father. In gathering for the Eucharist, we celebrate the presence of the Lord among us as we recall the mighty actions of God through which He seeks the salvation of all and draws us all towards unity. In communion with the Lord, we are called to proclaim in both word and deed, here and now, the divine love which heals and reconciles and saves. As the Apostle Paul says: "All this is from God who reconciled us to Himself through Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation" (2 Cor 5:18).

As we commemorate thirty-five years of dialogue between Orthodox and Catholic theologians in North America, we give thanks to God for the opportunity to share in this ministry of reconciliation.



The Orthodox-Catholic Theological Consultation was established in 1965 by the Standing Conference of Canonical Orthodox Bishops in America and the National Conference of Catholic Bishops. Since 1997, the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops has also been a co-sponsor. The establishment of this consultation reflected the decisions of the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965) and the decisions of the Pan-Orthodox Conferences (1961-1968). This Consultation was the first official dialogue between theologians of the Orthodox and Catholic churches to be established in modern times. It marked a new phase in the relationship between our churches. Since its beginnings, this Consultation has sought to contribute to the ultimate goal of restoration of full communion between our churches, through theological dialogue nurtured by prayer and characterized by mutual respect.

We believe that, through God's grace, our Consultation has already contributed to the growing rapprochement between our two churches. Our discussions and our twenty Agreed Statements have examined both issues which have divided our churches and teaching and practices which have expressed an essential unity of faith. The Consultation has also made recommendations for addressing a variety of challenges that we face together in modern society. We have addressed concerns in the areas of mixed marriages, the spiritual formation of children in Orthodox-Catholic families, and the common commitment to uphold the dignity of human life. Our studies have contributed to our churches' pastoral care of God's people, as well as to the progress of other ecumenical dialogues and to scholarly work on the topic of church unity. Through God's love and mercy, the results of this Consultation have been very positive.

The experience of our Consultation also has provided a valuable background for a number of other forums which bring together representatives of the Orthodox and Catholic churches. We are especially grateful for the important wit-

ness and work of the Joint International Commission for Theological Dialogue between the Roman Catholic Church and the Orthodox Church since 1979, as well as the Joint Committee of Orthodox and Catholic Bishops in the United States since 1981. We appreciate the opportunities we have had to assist in their work, through our responses to the statements of the International Commission and through providing theological advice to the Joint Committee of Bishops.

Moreover, during these thirty-five years we have noticed, in many places, a growth in positive relationships between Orthodox and Catholic clergy and laity. Our churches' various encounters for prayer, study and common witness have done much to eliminate age-old misunderstandings and to deepen mutual respect. We take special note of the pilgrimage of Orthodox and Catholic bishops to Rome and Constantinople in 1995. Similar pilgrimages were made by groups of Orthodox and Catholics from the Boston and Chicago areas. These journeys bear witness to the spirit of reconciliation and the desire for unity that seems, in increasing measure, to characterize the People of God.

The encounter of representatives from both churches for theological conversation and common worship of God expresses, as Patriarch Bartholomew has said, "the firm decision of the two sister churches to remain estranged no longer from one another but to make an effort to prepare by sincere, honest and appropriate means, the way towards the restoration of unity and communion in Christ, for the glory of the all-powerful God and the salvation of his people everywhere" (1993).

### **Reaffirming Our Common Commitment to Restoring Full Communion**

As our dialogue completes its thirty-fifth year, the members of the Orthodox-Catholic Consultation in North America

take this opportunity to reaffirm the importance of the ecumenical commitment and witness of our churches. We especially reaffirm the significance of theological dialogue between the Orthodox and Catholic churches, which seeks the restoration of full communion based upon the profession of the apostolic faith, and expressed in eucharistic sharing and concelebration.

We are convinced that a unique relationship exists between our churches in spite of our division. This relationship is rooted in the fact that we continue to proclaim and to share the essential elements of the apostolic faith. Over the years, our own discussions in North America and our Agreed Statements on such critical topics as the Eucharist, the Church, the Pastoral Office and Baptism bear witness to this affirmation. It is for this very reason that in recent times the Catholic and Orthodox churches have been described as “sister churches.”

The bonds that continue to unite our sister churches are powerfully expressed when – together or separately – we worship the Father through Christ in the Spirit, and honor those who are close to God. While we have become separated as churches, our union with Christ and His saints has remained an unbreakable bond of faith, hope and love. Through the life of both our churches, we share a special bond with Mary, the Virgin Mother of God, and with the other saints who surround us as a “cloud of witnesses” (Heb 12:1). Among them, both Orthodox and Catholics are especially mindful of the countless martyrs of the twentieth century who have shed their blood in common witness to Christ, the Savior.

Supported by the examples and prayers of these faithful witnesses, we cannot overlook the difficult issues which continue to divide us and prevent the restoration of full communion between the Orthodox Church and the Catholic Church. The disputed points dividing our churches are serious and demand our continuing attention. Among these, we feel es-

pecially that issues related to conciliarity, primacy and the exercise of authority require much deeper theological reflection both within our churches and in our bilateral dialogues. Pope John Paul II himself has recognized the difficulties which the papacy presents to many, and has repeatedly invited theological reflection from all Christian traditions on this critical topic (eg., *Ut Unum Sint* nrs. 95-96).

The relationships between our churches today are very different from even thirty-five years ago, when our Consultation began. Many of the issues that divide Orthodox and Catholics date back centuries. They often reflected significantly different perspectives on scripture and tradition, and were frequently compounded by tragic historical events and bitter memories. Yet, as we examine these issues today, it is clear that our context is very different. We are no longer strangers to one another. Isolation has given way to regular contacts, especially here in North America. The prayer of Our Lord for the unity of His followers (John 17:21) rings urgently in our ears. The prayers of faithful people for the unity of the churches are bearing fruit in our meetings, and in the way we approach the difficult issues that still divide us.

We believe that, with the guidance of the Spirit, the issues which continue to divide us are not beyond resolution. We are convinced that the Lord is calling us not only to speak honestly about our differences, but also to find resolutions to them which are loving, truthful and salutary. With this in mind, we echo the words of Pope John Paul II and the late Patriarch Dimitrios: "Seeking only the glory of God through the accomplishment of His will, we state anew our resolute determination to do everything possible to hasten the day when full communion will be reestablished between the Catholic Church and the Orthodox Church, and when we will be at last able to concelebrate the divine Eucharist" (1979).

### **The Importance of Dialogue**

We are aware that the ecumenical enterprise is considered highly suspect in some circles within both our churches. Indeed, a professed anti-ecumenism is the hallmark of some uncanonical Orthodox bodies, and similar ways of thinking have a significant following within the canonical Orthodox churches as well. Within the Catholic Church, despite the affirmation of the central importance of ecumenical dialogue expressed by the Second Vatican Council as well as by hierarchical and theological leadership on both world and regional levels, there are still groups which remain apathetic towards, or even directly opposed to the spirit of ecumenism.

Even though on the surface these Catholic and Orthodox groups which oppose ecumenical dialogue appear to have diametrically opposed theological beliefs, there are certain underlying characteristics that they hold in common. They tend, first of all, to be convinced that theirs is the only true Church, and that outside its visible boundaries there can be nothing but error and confusion. Thus there is the tendency to see the world in black and white: there is either the Church in its fullness, or there is utter darkness. This is usually coupled with the conviction that "the world," along with other Christian churches and world religions, is unrelentingly hostile to the one Church, which stands in radical contradiction to it. In this way of thinking, to enter into dialogue with other Christian bodies is to run the risk of exposing the Church to the possibility of compromise or syncretism, and even to the loss of the Christian faith itself. According to this view, the only acceptable form of Christian dialogue is to proclaim the truth one possesses, in the hope that the others will recognize their errors and return to the one Church.

We recognize that some concerns of these adversaries of ecumenism have a certain merit. The Christian faith is indeed a precious gift from God, and cannot in any way be

negotiated or compromised. Moreover, both the Catholic and Orthodox Churches have a strong sense of possessing, as ecclesial bodies, the fullness of truth and the means of salvation. And yet we do not believe that this implies for either church that other Christian communions necessarily are devoid of truth and grace.

One of the basic principles of ecumenical dialogue is to make a distinction between the content of faith and the words in which that faith is expressed. Since human words can never exhaust the divine mystery, our effort in dialogue is to look beyond what appear to be contradictory verbal formulas to the faith that underlies them, to determine whether or not those formulas are witnessing to the same faith in different ways. Thus ecumenical dialogue, far from compromising the faith of either party, is an effort to rediscover and rearticulate the common faith that unites us in the same Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior. Our conviction is that dialogue is not the abandonment of the truth of the Christian faith but rather an attempt to deepen together our understanding of that truth, free from the polemics of the past, by listening to the witness of the one truth that is given by our two traditions. Far from encouraging relativism, genuine dialogue begins with an immersion in one's own tradition and a desire to share its richness with others for the sake of the salvation of the world.

### **The Challenge Before Us**

Recent statements by Pope John Paul II and Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew have forcefully reaffirmed this commitment to ecumenical dialogue on behalf of their churches. The recent visit of Pope John Paul II to Romania and his meeting with Patriarch Teoctist was a memorable occasion which further strengthened the commitment of our churches to reconciliation and visible unity. Both the Catholic Church

and the Orthodox Church are committed to the process of Christian reconciliation and the visible unity of the churches, for the sake of the world and for the glory of God.

At the same time, we also recognize that in recent years the relationship between our churches has been severely strained in many places. The positive accomplishments of recent decades have been, on some occasions, set aside, and old animosities have resurfaced. Within parts of Eastern Europe, the reestablishment of religious freedom after a period of intense repression by various Communist regimes has led to disputes between Catholics and Orthodox involving not only church teachings but also property and social rights. Accusations of proselytism and misunderstandings regarding episcopal appointments have rekindled old hostilities. Sadly, these events have been compounded at times by insufficient communication between our hierarchies. In addition, those who oppose the dialogue between our churches have, in some cases, intentionally distorted the truth about what those churches believe and how they live.

Mindful of these facts, this Consultation wishes to express the following convictions, not only for the sake of our own churches but also for all those involved in the ecumenical movement:

- We believe that the quest for the unity of Christians and the restoration of the visible unity of the churches is rooted in the very actions of God who "desires everyone to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth" (1Tim 2:4). As Catholics and Orthodox, we profess our faith in the Triune God who loves, heals, forgives and reconciles. Christ has come to break down the barriers caused by sin and to restore us to fellowship with the Father through the Holy Spirit. As Catholics and Orthodox who seek to follow Christ through the preaching and sacraments of His Church, we are called to live a life which bears witness to the healing actions of our God. We are called to be "ambassadors of Christ" (2 Cor

5:20), proclaiming the Gospel of reconciliation in our words and through our deeds, within our churches, our families and our society.

- The historic divisions within Christianity have genuinely and seriously wounded the life of our churches over the centuries. Our appreciation of the apostolic faith in all its richness and fullness has been distorted by our divisions. Our understanding of the Church and its scripture, sacraments, ministry, witness and mission has been narrowed and tainted by the divisive theological debates of the past. The historic divisions of the churches have led in many cases to diverse emphases and perspectives in doctrine and ethics, which have not always been complementary.

- Church divisions reflecting divergent teachings do not honor God or help to proclaim the Gospel to all nations (Matt 28:19). How can we proclaim a God of reconciliation and be disunited among ourselves? How can we speak to the nations of the earth of the need for peace and unity and be disunited as churches? The division among the churches is a scandal that impedes the proclamation of the Gospel in the world today. Sadly, the divisions of the churches often contribute to bitter divisions within families and national cultures.

- The process of reconciliation of the churches, however, is not merely a matter of goodwill; it requires solid and consistent theological reflection. In order for this theological reflection to bear good fruit, it must be rooted in scripture and tradition and nurtured by prayer. It must be oriented toward the needs of God's people today. Our reconciliation requires a theology which is truly life-giving and which serves the Author of life.

In this Consultation, our common study has enabled us to view difficult issues from a variety of perspectives. In so doing, we have sought together to make a distinction between the faith of the Church and the historical explications of that faith. We have also been guided by the experience of the



Church of the first millennium where a diversity of theological expression and liturgical practice was generally able to enrich Christian faith throughout the world.

As Catholics and Orthodox, we honor those before us who boldly and creatively taught the apostolic faith, often in the face of heresies. They sought to maintain the unity of the churches and, where necessary, to heal the divisions between the churches; their desire to teach the apostolic faith free from error was complemented by their desire to maintain the unity of the churches. They were ready, when necessary, to find new terminology which expressed the faith more precisely and which could reconcile divisions.

The process of reconciliation requires from us, as well, that our churches be engaged in genuine renewal, which aims at bearing witness more clearly to the presence of the Risen Lord in our midst. Trusting in the guidance of the Holy Spirit, both our churches are called to examine our worship, our teaching and preaching, and our exercise of authority, so that the message of the Gospel may be proclaimed clearly in all we say and in all we do.

We recognize that theological discussion between the Orthodox and Catholic churches, and our gradual growth towards reconciliation, takes place within the broader context of the ecumenical movement. Both churches view the ecumenical movement primarily as a means through which all the churches of the divided Christian family are seeking to restore their visible unity in accordance with the apostolic faith. From our perspective, we are convinced that the ecumenical movement must always be centered upon Christ and his Gospel, as that Gospel has been proclaimed through twenty centuries. It must serve the churches in their quest for the restoration of visible unity in accordance with the apostolic faith. We acknowledge the important work of various other bilateral and multilateral dialogues and other expressions of the ecumenical movement. Many of these dialogues

have contributed to our own work, particularly through their renewed attention to the doctrine of the Holy Trinity and its relationship to an ecclesiology of communion. Several of these other dialogues have reached agreement on significant topics. Now, in some cases, their conclusions and recommendations are being implemented and incorporated into church life. Our own Consultation has been inspired by their example, and enriched by their theological contributions. We are challenged to make our own theological work equally meaningful to the faithful of all Christians.

### **Conclusion**

The ultimate goal of dialogue between the Catholic Church and the Orthodox Church is restoration of full communion. We recognize that this is a gradual process. Just as our alienation took place over the course of time, so also our reconciliation, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, is taking place gradually. In order to be faithful to Our Lord, this process must be rooted in the Gospel and nurtured by prayer for unity. It must be fostered by theological dialogue, and expressed in acts of love and mutual forgiveness. As members of sister churches which are responsible for upholding the apostolic faith, we cannot seek the victory of one tradition over another. Rather, we seek the victory of Christ over our divisions, for the sake of the salvation of all. To Him be glory together with His eternal Father and His all-holy, good and life-giving Spirit, now and forever and unto ages of ages. Amen.

## AT THE DAWN OF A NEW MILLENNIUM

***The North American Joint Committee  
of Orthodox and Catholic Bishops***

*Orthodox Academy of Crete,  
Chania, Greece  
October 4, 2000*

Our Joint Committee of Orthodox and Catholic Bishops was founded in 1981 as a forum where Orthodox and Catholic hierarchs from the United States and Canada could discuss pastoral matters of concern to both our churches. Gathered together now at our seventeenth meeting, we wish to take stock of our Joint Committee's work, and to affirm the importance of continued and intensified dialogue between our two communions.

We look back with joy on the dramatic events of the 1960s that brought an end to the many centuries of hostility that kept us apart from one another. The meeting between Ecumenical Patriarch Athenagoras and Pope Paul VI in Jerusalem in 1964 was followed by the formal lifting of the 1054 *anathemas* on December 7, 1965. Those excommunications were reversed, to be replaced by relationships of love – they were “erased from the memory of the Church” and “consigned to oblivion.” The growing dialogue of charity between Catholics and Orthodox led finally to the establishment of an official International Joint Commission for Theological Dialogue between the Catholic Church and the Orthodox

Church by Ecumenical Patriarch Dimitrios I and Pope John Paul II when the Pope visited Istanbul in November 1979. This renewed relationship has been symbolized by the semi-annual exchange of delegations between the sister churches of Rome and Constantinople on their respective feast days, and a rejection among our faithful of "every form of proselytism, every attitude which would or could be perceived as a lack of respect" (Common Declaration of Pope John Paul II and Ecumenical Patriarch Dimitrios I, December 7, 1987).

With gratitude we note that this theological dialogue was anticipated by almost fifteen years in the United States. Prior to the establishment of our Joint Committee of Orthodox and Catholic Bishops in 1981, an official Orthodox-Catholic Theological Consultation had been meeting since September 9, 1965, even before the excommunications were lifted. In North America, where Catholics and Orthodox live side by side in a place that is to a large extent free of the political and religious tension that has often been present in our countries of origin, our theological dialogue has been able to make much progress and to address various theological and pastoral questions touching upon our relationship. At its June 2000 meeting, our North American Theological Consultation issued a document entitled, "Sharing the Ministry of Reconciliation: Statement on the Orthodox-Catholic Dialogue and the Ecumenical Movement." We wish to express our satisfaction with this important text, and we recommend it warmly to our faithful. We make our own its evaluation of the Catholic-Orthodox dialogue and the broader ecumenical movement as rooted in the very actions of God who "desires everyone to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth" (1 Tim 2:4).

The fall of communism in Eastern and Central Europe and the establishment of religious freedom in those countries ten years ago now is a source of deep joy for all people of faith. But these profound changes also unleashed hostilities

between our communities there that had remained under the surface, unaddressed during the long years of persecution, isolation, and silence. These problems focused on the status of the Eastern Catholic Churches and questions of property. At the same time, strident currents emerged in both our churches in those areas, fueled in part by the suspicion that ecumenism was a betrayal of the true faith, and that it had been manipulated by the communist authorities for their own ends in an attempt to weaken authentic Christian witness. This points to the urgent need to present the true nature of ecumenical dialogue, not as a betrayal of anyone's faith, but as an effort to understand what we truly have in common at a level deeper than our divisions and theological formulae.

All this has had a negative impact on the international dialogue which for the past ten years has been struggling to deal in a satisfactory way with the question of the status of the Eastern Catholic Churches. We regret that the Eighth Plenary Session of the international dialogue, held in July 2000 at Emmitsburg, Maryland, was unable to make progress on this and other significant issues.

The difficulties that have recently beset the international dialogue do not alter our conviction that continued dialogue in love is the only way that our churches can be faithful to Our Lord's command to love one another, and to be reconciled. Indeed, when difficulties arise the need for dialogue becomes even greater. As we look back on our experience of dialogue with one another as bishops of the Orthodox and Catholic churches, we realize that through an honest and well-informed exchange of views a solution to even the most persistent disagreements can be perceived. Our Joint Committee of Bishops has issued statements dealing with ordination, mixed marriages and the recent tensions in Eastern and Central Europe, and we are confident that much more progress can be made on these and other issues. We encourage our Orthodox and Catholic faithful everywhere

to engage one another in an exchange of views in a spirit of openness and humility so that the Spirit's work of reconciliation might continue, for the glory of God.

Our Joint Committee is meeting on the island of Crete, whose soil has been fed by the blood of a host of martyrs, and whose history has not been unaffected by our sad divisions. We take this opportunity to give thanks to God for the great strides that have been made to overcome what divides us. As the new millennium dawns, we join our prayer to those of Orthodox and Catholic faithful around the world that our churches may continue to set aside the animosities of the past and look forward in hope to that blessed day when we shall once again be united around the common table of our Lord.

**BAPTISM AND "SACRAMENTAL ECONOMY"****An Agreed Statement  
of The North American Orthodox-Catholic  
Theological Consultation**

*St. Vladimir's Orthodox Seminary,  
Crestwood, New York  
June 3, 1999*

**Introduction**

For the past three years the North American Orthodox-Catholic Theological Consultation has directed its attention to the concluding section of the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed: in particular to the confession of "one baptism," and to the faith in one Holy Spirit and in "one holy, catholic, and apostolic Church" to which this single baptism is so closely related, and with which it constitutes an indivisible unity. We have chosen to consider this topic, first of all, as part of a larger and continuing reflection on baptism's constitutive role in establishing and revealing the fundamental character of the Church as a communion. Secondly, we wish to respond to the criticisms made by various groups of the statement issued by the Joint International Commission for Theological Dialogue between the Catholic and Orthodox Churches at Balamand, Lebanon, in 1993, "Uniatism, Method of Union of the Past, and the Present Search for Full Communion," especially to protests against that statement's call for an end to the practice of rebaptism of converts (n. 13) and its reference to the

Catholic and Orthodox communions as “sister churches”(n. 14). Finally, we recognize that our consideration of these protests directs us back to earlier statements which our own Consultation has issued: “The Principle of Economy” (1976); “On the Agenda of the Great and Holy Council” (1977); “On the Lima Document” (1984); “Apostolicity as God’s Gift to the Church” (1986); our “Response” (1988) to the “Bari Document” issued by the International Commission in 1987; and finally our “Response” (1994) to the Balamand document itself. In drafting this present statement, we have elected to take our own advice and to offer a “deeper historical and theological investigation” of whether “our churches do in fact find the same essential content of faith present in each other” (“Response to the Balamand Statement,” n. 9). In the following sections we shall endeavor a) to summarize our findings regarding our common understanding of baptism, as well as its unity with the life of the Church and the action of the Holy Spirit; b) to elucidate the problems which, in relatively recent times, have arisen with respect to the mutual recognition of each other’s baptism; and c) to present our conclusions, together with certain recommendations which we feel are necessary, in order that on various levels our dialogue be established on a solid and unambiguous foundation. Only if we have reached clarity on our common understanding of baptism, we believe, can our churches proceed to discuss, charitably and truthfully, those issues which at present appear to constitute genuine impediments to our unity in the one Bread and Cup of Christ.

## I. ON BAPTISM

**A. A Matter of Faith:** Baptism rests upon and derives its reality from the faith of Christ himself, the faith of the Church, and the faith of the believer.



1. *The faith of Christ*: With this Pauline expression we refer to the fact that baptism, like all the sacraments, is given to us first of all as the result of Christ's loving fidelity to His Father, and as a sign of His faithfulness in the Holy Spirit to fallen humanity, "so that we are justified not by the works of the law but through the faith of Christ Jesus" (Gal 2:16, cf. Rom 3:22,26; Phil 3:9). Baptism is not a human work, but the rebirth from above, effected through "water and the Spirit," that introduces us into the life of the Church. It is that gift by which God grounds and establishes the Church as the community of the New Covenant, the "Israel of God" (Gal 6:16), by engrafting us into the body of the crucified and risen Messiah (Rom 6:3-11; 11:17-24), into the one sacrament (*mysterion*) which is Christ himself (Eph 1:3; 3:3; Col 1:27 and 2:2).

2. *The faith of the Church*: In the Church of the Apostles and Fathers, baptism was never understood as a private ceremony, but was a corporate event. This is indicated by the development of the Lenten fast in the fourth century, when catechumens attended their final instructions before baptism at the paschal vigil: their baptism was the occasion for the whole community's repentance and renewal. Likewise, the definitive statement of the whole Church's faith, the "We believe" of the Creed, was derived from the solemn questions addressed by the sacramental minister to the candidate in the baptismal font. Whoever, then, is baptized, is baptized into the unique community of the Messiah, and it is that community's common faith in the Savior's person and promises that the candidate is obliged to make his or her own. As the Church, we acknowledge the trustworthiness of Him who said, "Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live" (John 11:25). This is the faith of the Apostles and Fathers, of the martyrs and ascetics, and of "all the saints who in every generation have been well-pleasing to God"

(Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom). In the words of the renewal of baptismal promises in the Easter liturgy of the Roman Rite, "This is our faith. This is the faith of the Church. We are proud to profess it in Christ Jesus our Lord."

3. *The faith of the Christian*: As just noted, every Christian is obliged to make his or her own the faith of the Church. The "We believe" of the whole Church must become the individual Christian's "I believe," whether spoken by the adult candidate for baptism on his or her own behalf, or on behalf of a child by its sponsor and the assembled community, in the full expectation that, when it has grown, the child will make the common faith its own as well. By baptism, every Christian becomes a "new creation" (2 Cor 5:17), and is called to believe and to grow "into the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God...to the measure of the stature and fullness of Christ" (Eph 4:13). Baptism is the beginning of each believer's life in the Spirit, the implanting within each of the seed of the fullness of Christ "who fills all in all" (Eph 1:23): a life on earth which is at once the present reality and the continuing vocation of each Christian, as the "temple of the Holy Spirit" (1 Cor 6:19) and the dwelling place of divine glory (John 17:22-24). Christian initiation is the ground of our transfiguration "from glory to glory" (2 Cor 3:18). It calls each of us to spiritual warfare as Christ's soldiers (Eph 6:10-17), and anoints us each with the oil of the Holy Spirit as priests who, in imitation of Christ, are to offer up ourselves as "a living sacrifice pleasing to God" (Rom 12:1; cf. Phil 4:18), and as prophets who are to call down upon ourselves and upon our world the fire from Heaven which transforms (cf. 1 Kgs 18:36-39; Matt 3:11; Luke 12:49). Also in baptism, we believe that we recover the royalty of Adam in Paradise, and that, as "having been clothed with Christ" (Rom 13:14), we are called to become ourselves the "christs" – the "anointed ones" – of God.

## **B. Baptism within the Rites of Initiation**

1. *One Moment in a Single Action:* In ancient times, initiation into the Church was understood as a single action with different “moments.” Thus in Acts 2:38-42, we find baptism with water directly followed by the reception of the Holy Spirit and “the breaking of bread” (Eucharist) by the community; other texts in Acts present the gift of the Spirit as preceding baptism (Acts 10:44-48; 11:15-17). This continuity between the various stages of initiation is consistently reproduced in the oldest liturgical texts and in early patristic witnesses: baptism with water in the name of the Trinity, a post- (or pre-) baptismal anointing and/or laying-on of hands invoking the Spirit, and participation in the Eucharist. The present-day ordering of the Eastern Christian rites of initiation and the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults in the Roman liturgy preserve this unity. In the case of infant baptism, medieval Latin practice separated this unity of action, deferring confirmation by the bishop and Eucharistic communion to a later date. Indeed, the distinction which is customarily made today in both churches between baptism and chrismation, or confirmation, was never intended to separate the reception of the Spirit from incorporation into the body of Christ, whose quickening principle is the same Spirit (see, e.g., Rom 8:9-11, as well part III, B5 below).

2. *The Method of Baptism:* In ancient times, and in the contemporary Orthodox Church, baptism is administered as a threefold immersion in water hallowed by prayer and oil, while the baptizing minister invokes the Holy Trinity. In the Roman rite of the Catholic Church since the later Middle Ages, baptism has usually been administered by the infusion or pouring of water sanctified by prayer and the sign of the Cross, accompanied by the Trinitarian invocation. In past centuries and even today, some Orthodox have protested against infusion as being an invalid form of baptism, basing

their protest on the mandate of baptismal immersion implied in such Biblical passages as Rom 6:4 (“We were buried with [Christ] by baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead, we too might walk in newness of life”). This criticism, however, should be measured against the following considerations: a) “immersion” in the ancient church did not always mean total submersion – archaeological research indicates that many ancient baptismal pools were far too shallow for total submersion; b) the Orthodox Church itself can and does recognize baptism by infusion as valid in cases of emergency; c) for most of the past millennium, the Orthodox Church has in fact recognized Catholic baptism as valid (see our discussion in Part II below).

3. *The Symbolism of Baptism:* Baptism is at once a death and a new birth, a washing-away of sin and the gift of the living water promised by Christ, the grace of forgiveness and regeneration in the Spirit, a stripping-off of our mortality and a clothing with the robe of incorruption. The baptismal font is the “tomb” from which the newborn Christian rises, and, as the place of our incorporation into the life of the Church, the “womb” and “mother” of the Christian, the pool of the divine light of the Spirit, the wellspring of immortality, the gate of heaven, entry into the kingdom of God, cleansing, seal, bath of regeneration and bridal chamber. All these are meanings the Fathers saw in this sacrament, and all of them we continue to affirm.

4. *The Non-Repeatability of Baptism:* It is our common teaching that baptism in water in the name of the Holy Trinity, as the Christian’s new birth, is given once and once only. In the language of fourth-century Fathers of East and West, it confers the indelible seal (*sphragis*, character) of the King. As the definitive entry of an individual believer into the Church, it cannot be repeated. To be sure, the grace of baptism may be betrayed by serious sin, but in such cases the modes prescribed for the recovery of grace are repen-

tance, confession and – in the Orthodox usage for apostasy – anointing with the sacred chrism; reconciliation with the Church is never accomplished by baptism, whose repetition we have always recognized as a sacrilege.

### **C. The Results of our Investigation: “We Confess One Baptism”**

The Orthodox and Catholic members of our Consultation acknowledge, in both of our traditions, a common teaching and a common faith in one baptism, despite some variations in practice which, we believe, do not affect the substance of the mystery. We are therefore moved to declare that we also recognize each other's baptism as one and the same. This recognition has obvious ecclesiological consequences. The Church is itself both the milieu and the effect of baptism, and is not of our making. This recognition requires each side of our dialogue to acknowledge an ecclesial reality in the other, however much we may regard their way of living the Church's reality as flawed or incomplete. In our common reality of baptism, we discover the foundation of our dialogue, as well as the force and urgency of the Lord Jesus' prayer “that all may be one.” Here, finally, is the certain basis for the modern use of the phrase, “sister churches.” At the same time, since some are unwilling to accept this mutual recognition of baptism with all its consequences, the following investigation and explanation seems necessary.

## **II. PROBLEMS IN THE MUTUAL RECOGNITION OF BAPTISM**

### **1. Inconsistencies in the Reception of Adults into Ecclesial Communion**

1. The centralized administration of the modern Catholic Church, and the absence of any office resembling the papacy in the modern Orthodox Church, helps to explain the con-

trast between the diversity in modes of reception of Catholics practiced by local Orthodox churches and the (relatively) unitary practice of the Catholic Church over the past five hundred years in receiving Orthodox. From the fifth-century writings of St. Augustine on the Donatist Schism, the Latin tradition has been able to draw on a clearly articulated rationale for recognizing the validity, though not necessarily the fruitfulness, of trinitarian baptism outside the bounds of the visible church. This does not mean, however, that the rebaptism of Orthodox has never occurred in the Catholic Church; it appears, in fact, to have occurred rather frequently in the Middle Ages. Pope Alexander VI affirmed the validity of Orthodox baptism just after the turn of the sixteenth century, and Rome has periodically confirmed this ruling since then. Nevertheless, rebaptism continued to be practiced on the eastern frontiers of Catholic Europe in Poland and the Balkans – contrary to Roman policy – well into the seventeenth century. In addition, the practice of “conditional baptism,” a pastoral option officially intended for cases of genuine doubt about the validity of a person’s earlier baptism, was also widely – and erroneously – used in the reception of “dissident” Eastern Christians up to the era of Vatican II itself, and afterwards was practiced occasionally in parts of Eastern Europe. Vatican II, however, was explicit in recognizing both the validity and the efficacy of Orthodox sacraments (*Unitatis Redintegratio* 15; cf. *Ecumenical Directory* [1993] 99a).

2. In the Orthodox Church, a consistent position on the reception of those baptized in other communions is much more difficult, though not impossible, to discern. On the one hand, since the Council in Trullo (692), the canonical collections authoritative in Orthodoxy have included the enactments of third-century North African councils presided over by Cyprian of Carthage, as well as the important late-fourth-century Eastern collection, *The Apostolic Canons*. Cyprian’s

position, supported by his contemporary bishop Firmilian of Caesaraea in Cappadocia, was that salvation and grace are not mediated by schismatic communities, so that baptism administered outside the universal apostolic communion is simply invalid as an act of Christian initiation, deprived of the life-giving Spirit (see Cyprian, Epp 69:7; 71:1; 73:2; 75:17, 22-25). Influential as it was to be, Cyprian and Firmilian both acknowledge that their position on baptism is a relatively new one, forged probably in the 230s to deal with the extraordinary new challenges presented by Christian sectarianism in an age of persecution, but following logically from a clear sense of the Church's boundaries. *The Apostolic Canons*, included in the larger *Apostolic Constitutions* and probably representative of Church discipline in Syria during the 380s, identifies sacraments celebrated by "heretics" as illegitimate (can. 45 [46]), although it is not clear in what sense the word "heretic" is being used; the following canon brands it as equally sacrilegious for a bishop or presbyter to rebaptize someone who is already truly baptized, and to recognize the baptism of "someone who has been polluted by the ungodly." Both Cyprian and the *Apostolic Canons*, in any case, draw a sharp line between the authentic visible Church and every other group which exists outside its boundaries, and accords no value whatever to the rites of those "outside." On the other hand, continuing Eastern practice from at least the fourth century has followed a more nuanced position. This position is reflected in Basil of Caesarea's *First Canonical Epistle* (Ep 188, dated 374), addressed to Amphilochius of Iconium, which—claiming to follow the practice of "the ancients"—distinguishes among three types of groups "outside" the Church: heretics, "who differ with regard to faith in God;" schismatics, who are separated from the body of the Church "for some ecclesiastical reasons and differ from other [Christians] on questions that can be resolved;" and "parasynagogues," or dissidents who have formed rival

communities simply in opposition to legitimate authority (Ep 188.1). Only in the case of heretics in the strict sense – those with a different understanding of God, among whom Basil includes Manichaeans, Gnostics, and Marcionites – is baptism required for entry into communion with the Church. Concerning the second and third groups, Basil declares that they are still “of the Church,” and as such are to be admitted into full communion without baptism. This policy is also reflected in Canon 95 of the Council in Trullo, which distinguishes between “Severians” (i.e., non-Chalcedonians) and Nestorians, who are to be received by confession of faith; schismatics, who are to be received by chrismation; and heretics, who alone require baptism. Thus, in spite of the solemn rulings of the Fifth and Sixth Ecumenical Councils against their Christological positions, “Severians” and Nestorians are clearly reckoned as still “of the Church,” and seem to be understood in Basil’s category of “parasynagogues;” their baptisms are thus understood – to use scholastic language – as valid, if perhaps illicit.

3. The schism between Catholics and Orthodox, unlike the schisms of the Non-Chalcedonian and East Syrian Churches, came into being much later, and only very slowly. Relations between Catholics and Orthodox through the centuries have been, in consequence, highly varied, ranging from full communion, on occasion, well into the late Middle Ages (and, in certain areas, until later still), to a rejection so absolute that it seemed to demand the rebaptism of new communicants. There are, however, in the Orthodox tradition two important synodical rulings which represent the continuation of the policy articulated by Basil, and affirmed by the Synod in Trullo and later Byzantine canonists, rulings which we believe are to be accorded primary importance: those of the Synod of Constantinople in 1484, and of Moscow in 1667. The first ruling, part of a document marking the Constantinopolitan Patriarchate’s formal repudiation of the



Union of Ferrara-Florence (1439) with the Catholic Church, prescribed that Catholics be received into Orthodox communion by the use of chrism. In the service for the reception of Catholic converts which the Synod published, this anointing is not accompanied by the prayers which characterize the rite of initiation; we find instead formulas of a penitential character. The rite therefore appears to have been understood as part of a process of reconciliation, rather than as a reiteration of post-baptismal chrismation. It is this provision of Constantinople in 1484, together with Canon 95 of the Synod in Trullo, which the Council of Moscow in 1667 invokes in its decree forbidding the rebaptism of Catholics, a decree that has remained authoritative in the East Slavic Orthodox churches to the present day.

**B. Constantinople 1755, the *Pedalion* of Nicodemus of the Holy Mountain, and “Sacramental Economy”**

4. *Constantinople 1755*: In an atmosphere of heightened tension between Orthodoxy and Catholicism following the Melkite Union of 1724, and of intensified proselytism pursued by Catholic missionaries in the Near East and in Hapsburg-ruled Transylvania, the Ecumenical Patriarch Cyril V issued a decree in 1755 requiring the baptism of Roman Catholics, Armenians and all others outside the visible bounds of the Orthodox Church, when they seek full communion with it. This decree has never been formally rescinded, but subsequent rulings by the Patriarchate of Constantinople (e.g., in 1875, 1880 and 1888) did allow for the reception of new communicants by chrismation rather than baptism. Nevertheless, these rulings left rebaptism as an option subject to “pastoral discretion.” In any case, by the late nineteenth century a comprehensive new sacramental theology had appeared in Greek-speaking Orthodoxy which provided a precise rationale for such pastoral discretion; for

the source of this new rationale, we must examine the influential figure of St. Nicodemus of the Holy Mountain (1748-1809).

5. *Nicodemus and the Pedalion*: The Orthodox world owes an immense debt to this Athonite monk, who edited and published the *Philokalia* (1783), as well as numerous other works of a patristic, pastoral and liturgical nature. In the *Pedalion* (1800), his enormously influential edition of – and commentary on – canonical texts, Nicodemus gave form and substance to the requirement of rebaptism decreed by Cyril V. Thoroughly in sympathy with the decree of 1755, and moved by his attachment to a perceived golden age in the patristic past, he underscored the antiquity and hence priority of the African Councils and *Apostolic Canons*, and argued strenuously, in fact, for the first-century provenance of the latter. Nicodemus held up these documents, with their essentially exclusivist ecclesiology, as the universal voice of the ancient Church. In so doing, he systematically reversed what had been the normative practice of the Eastern church since at least the fourth century, while recognizing the authority of both Cyprian's conciliar legislation on baptism and the *Apostolic Canons*. Earlier Byzantine canonists had understood Cyprian's procedure as superseded by later practice, and had interpreted the *Apostolic Canons* in the light of the rulings of Basil the Great, the Synod in Trullo, and other ancient authoritative texts.

6. *"Sacramental Economy" according to Nicodemus of the Holy Mountain*: Nicodemus was clearly obliged, however, to reckon with the approach of Basil the Great and the ecumenically-ranked Synod in Trullo to baptism "outside" the visible Church, different though it was from that of Cyprian. His attempt to reconcile his sources with each other drew on a very ancient term, *oikonomia*, used in the New Testament and patristic literature to denote both God's salvific plan and the prudent "management" of the Church's

affairs, and employed in later canonical literature as roughly the equivalent of “pastoral discretion” or stewardship. In adapting this term to differentiate between what he understood as the “strict” policy (*akriveia*) of the ancient Church and the apparently more flexible practice (*oikonomia*) of the Byzantine era, Nicodemus inadvertently bestowed a new meaning on the term *oikonomia*. By means of this new understanding, Nicodemus was able to harmonize the earlier, stricter practice of Cyprian with that of Basil and other ancient canonical sources; so he could read the fathers of the fourth century as having exercised “economy” with regard to baptism by Arians in order to facilitate their reentry into the Church, just as the Synod in Trullo had done with respect to the “Severians” and Nestorians, and could interpret the treatment of Latin baptism by Constantinople at the Synod of 1484 and later Orthodox rulings as acts of “economy” designed to shield the Orthodox from the wrath of a more powerful Catholic Europe. In his own day, he argued, the Orthodox were protected by the might of the Turkish Sultan, and so were again free to follow the perennial “exactness” of the Church. Latins were therefore now to be rebaptized.

7. *Varying Understandings of the Phrase, “Pastoral Discretion”*: After the publication of the *Pedalion* in 1800, backed by Nicodemus’s formidable personal authority, the opposed principles of *akriveia* and *oikonomia* came to be accepted by much of Greek-speaking Orthodoxy as governing the application of canon law in such a way as to allow for either the rebaptism of Western Christians (*kat’akriveian*), or for their reception by chrismation or profession of faith (*kat’oikonomian*), without in either case attributing to their baptism any reality in its own right. This is the understanding that underlies the “pastoral discretion” enjoined by the Synod of Constantinople of 1875, as well as by numerous directives and statements of the Ecumenical Patriarchate since then. In the work of some modern canonists, oikono-

mia is understood as the use of an authority by the Church's hierarchy, in cases of pastoral need, to bestow a kind of retroactive reality on sacramental rites exercised "outside" the Orthodox Church – rites which in and of themselves remain invalid and devoid of grace. The hierarchy is endowed, in this interpretation, with a virtually infinite power, capable, as it were, of creating "validity" and bestowing grace where they were absent before. This new understanding of "economy" does not, however, enjoy universal recognition in the Orthodox Church. We have already noted that the East Slavic Orthodox churches remain committed to the earlier understanding and practice of the Byzantine era, which does not imply the possibility of making valid what is invalid, or invalid what is valid. Even within Greek-speaking Orthodoxy, "sacramental economy" in the full Nicodemean sense does not command universal acceptance. As a result, within world Orthodoxy, the issue of "sacramental economy" remains the subject of intense debate, but the Nicodemean interpretation is still promoted in important theological and monastic circles. Although these voices in the Orthodox world are significant ones, we do not believe that they represent the tradition and perennial teaching of the Orthodox Church on the subject of baptism.

### III. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### A. Conclusions

The "inconsistencies" to which we referred at the beginning of our second section turn out, on closer inspection, to be less significant than they might appear to be. Granted, a vocal minority in the Orthodox Church refuses to accord any validity to Catholic baptism, and thus continues to justify in theory (if less frequently in fact) the (re)baptism of converts from Catholicism. Against this one fact, however, we pres-

ent the following considerations:

1. The Orthodox and Catholic churches both teach the same understanding of baptism. This identical teaching draws on the same sources in scripture and tradition, and it has not varied in any significant way from the very earliest witnesses to the faith up to the present day.

2. A central element in this single teaching is the conviction that baptism comes to us as God's gift in Christ, through the Holy Spirit. It is therefore not "of us," but from above. The Church does not simply require the practice of baptism; rather, baptism is the Church's foundation. It establishes the Church, which is also not "of us" but, as the body of Christ quickened by the Spirit, is the presence in this world of the world to come.

3. The fact that our churches share and practice this same faith and teaching requires that we recognize in each other the same baptism and thus also recognize in each other, however "imperfectly," the present reality of the same Church. By God's gift we are each, in St. Basil's words, "of the Church."

4. We find that this mutual recognition of the ecclesial reality of baptism, in spite of our divisions, is fully consistent with the perennial teaching of both churches. This teaching has been reaffirmed on many occasions. The formal expression of the recognition of Orthodox baptism has been constant in the teaching of the popes since the beginning of the sixteenth century, and was emphasized again at the Second Vatican Council. The Synods of Constantinople in 1484 and Moscow in 1667 testify to the implicit recognition of Catholic baptism by the Orthodox churches, and do so in a way fully in accord with the earlier teaching and practice of antiquity and the Byzantine era.

5. The influential theory of "sacramental economy" propounded in the *Pedalion* commentaries does not represent the tradition and perennial teaching of the Orthodox Church;

it is rather an eighteenth-century innovation motivated by the particular historical circumstances operative in those times. It is not the teaching of scripture, of most of the Fathers, or of later Byzantine canonists, nor is it the majority position of the Orthodox churches today.

6. Catholics in the present day who tax the Orthodox with sins against charity, and even with sacrilege, because of the practice of rebaptism should bear in mind that, while the rebaptism of Orthodox Christians was officially repudiated by Rome five hundred years ago, it nonetheless continued in some places well into the following century and occasionally was done, under the guise of "conditional baptism," up to our own times.

### **B. Recommendations**

On the basis of these conclusions we would like to offer to our churches the following suggestions:

1. That the International Commission begin anew where the Bari statement of 1987, "Faith, Sacraments, and the Unity of the Church," came to an abrupt conclusion, simply recognizing similarities and differences in our practice of Christian initiation, and that it proceed to reaffirm explicitly and clearly, with full explanation, the theological grounds for mutual recognition by both churches of each other's baptism;

2. That our churches address openly the danger that some modern theories of "sacramental economy" pose, both for the continuation of ecumenical dialogue and for the perennial teaching of the Orthodox Church;

3. That the Patriarchate of Constantinople formally withdraw its decree on rebaptism of 1755;

4. That the Orthodox churches declare that the Orthodox reception of Catholics by chrismation does not constitute a repetition of any part of their sacramental initiation; and

5. That our churches make clear that the mutual recogni-

tion of baptism does not of itself resolve the issues that divide us, or reestablish full ecclesial communion between the Orthodox and Catholic Churches, but that it does remove a fundamental obstacle on our path towards full communion.

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plication of practical psaltic issues to ongoing international musicological academic research. This in itself is quite an impressive direction. Lastly, the photographic addendum that follows contains fifteen images from the proceedings and the Conference's musical events.

Fr. Constantine Terss

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> The ekphonic notation is primarily found in notated manuscripts from the eighth through the twelfth centuries in the liturgical books of the Prophetologion, Praxapostolos and Evangelion. As a notational system it is regarded as having guided the recitation of such readings during the liturgical services. For further reading see: Thibaut 1913; Høeg, Wellesz et al. 1935; Wellesz 1949; Psachou and Chatzetheodorou 1978.

<sup>2</sup> Patriarcheiu 1888.

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*Psalate synetos toi Theoi (Sing ye praises with understanding [Ps. 47. 7]).* Recordings from the First Pan-Hellenic Conference: "Theoria and Praxis of the Psaltic Art" (Athens, 3-5 November 2000); audio compact disc and booklet.

Gregorios Stathis: *The Maestores on the Psaltic Art. Psalate synetos toi Theoi.* (Recorded at the First Pan-Hellenic Conference: "The Theoria and Praxis of the Psaltic Art"; Athens: 3-5 November 2000; Chronology – Conclusions and Chants). Athens: Institute of Byzantine Musicology of the Holy Synod of the Church of Greece, 2001. 52-page booklet containing texts, music and photos; 2 audio compact disks.

*Psalate synetos to Theo (Sing ye praises with understanding [Ps. 47. 7]),* consists of two audio compact discs containing excerpts of the musical events that were a vital part of the whole and that I have yet to touch upon.

Two musical 'events' were planned in conjunction with the First Pan-Hellenic Conference on the Psaltic Art. The first took place in the Metropolitan Church of Athens on Sunday, 5 November 2000. On that particular Sunday the normal chanters of the Metropolitan Church stepped down to assist the Archon Protopsaltes of the Great Church of Christ, Leonidas Asteres, who led the right choir and the Protopsaltes of the Church of Hagia Sophia, Thessalonike, Charilaos Taliadoros, who led the left choir for divine services that morning. The services were officiated by His Beatitude Christodoulos, Archbishop of Athens and All Greece. The second event took place on the same evening as a conclusion or finale to the Conference in the church of Saint Panteleimon, Acharnon. This huge and beautifully-decorated church in central Athens served as the host for a music program of Byzantine and post-Byzantine chant presented by the choir led by Gr. Th. Stathis, "the Maestores of the Psaltic Art," which, in addition to its normal members (this writer has chanted with the maestores since 1988), was joined by other protopsaltai, lambadarioi, domestikoi and representatives of the Sacred Metropolitanates to the Conference.

Both 'events' were also broadcast by 89.4 FM, the Radio Station of the Church of Greece, and were later digitally mastered for the creation of this wonderful audio monument to the Conference. The first CD contains twelve excerpts selected by A. Chaldaïakes from the Orthros and Divine Liturgy served in the Metropolitan Church on Sunday morning and the second CD contains the fourteen selections presented by the 'maestores' on Sunday evening in the Church of St. Panteleimon. The small booklet that accompanies the CD offers short biographical notes on His Beatitude Christodoulos, Archbishop of Athens and All Greece, the Fathers Gregorios and Daniel of the Danielite Brotherhood, Leonidas Asteres, the Archon Protopsaltes of the Great Church of Christ, Charilaos Taliadoros, Protopsaltes of the Church of Hagia

Sophia, Thessalonike, Gregorios Th. Stathis, professor of the University of Athens and the choir of chanters, The Maestores of the Psaltic Art. Also included is a photographic album, chronology and the conclusions by Gr. Th. Stathis already mentioned above, as well as the musical contents of the CD with two notated pieces, the melos for the 3+40 or 100+3 *Kyrie eleeson* for the Pannychida by Gregorios Stathis in mode I and the kalophonic verse from the Polyeleos *Douloi, Kyrion*, "They have ears, but they hear not" (Ps. 135. 17) by Balasios the priest (17th c.), according to the exegesis of Chourmouzios, mode I. There is only one thing missing; the recordings of ekphonic and chyma chant listened to during A. Alygizakes' presentation would have made it a complete companion to the published *Proceedings*.

Nevertheless, in addition to making a wonderful memory of the Conference, the quality of chant on both CDs makes *Psaltate Synetos to Theo* a desired addition to any personal library of quality Byzantine chant recordings.

All things considered, these two offerings from the Institute of Byzantine Musicology of the Holy Synod of the Church of Greece's First Pan-Hellenic Conference on the Psaltic Art not only gives a tantalizing foretaste of the good things yet to come, but also serve as excellent testaments to the psaltic pulse of contemporary Byzantine musicological scholarship building up steam in Greece.

Taken together, the published *Proceedings* and the related CD are welcome additions to the libraries of serious collectors and students of chant, but also to those involved on a practical level with the Psaltic Art. While well-grounded in their field, the scholars contributing to the Conference are all just as familiar with the *analogion* and brought with them a practical sensitivity to the contemporary needs of today's chanter. For this, both the organizers and presenters of the First Pan-Hellenic Conference on the Psaltic Art are to be highly commended.

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Fr. Constantine Terss

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**Constantine Cavarnos. *St. Photios: Philosopher and Theologian***. Belmont, MA: The Institute for Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies, 1998, pp. 84.

The present volume is a study on the great ninth-century Orthodox theologian, Patriarch of Constantinople, Saint Photios. Professor Cavarnos discusses the theology and philosophy of St. Photios the Great. The book is divided into two parts: in the first part, an extensive study, the author deals with Photios as a philosopher. He presents the most important points of St. Photios' philosophy and theology, and in the second part Dr. Cavarnos presents five reviews that deal with the theology and philosophy of this great Patriarch. The objective of Photios is to attain to the knowledge of the "truth."

In the essay regarding Photios as a philosopher Dr. Cavarnos discusses the impact of classical philosophy, that is, Platonism,

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## SHARING THE MINISTRY OF RECONCILIATION

### ***Statement on the Orthodox-Catholic Dialogue and the Ecumenical Movement***

*The North American Orthodox-Catholic  
Theological Consultation  
Brookline, Massachusetts  
June 1, 2000*

### **The Ministry of Reconciliation**

Christ our Lord has called us to be His disciples through the life of His Church and for the sake of His world. By our baptism, we are united with Christ and with all those who are in Christ. By this mystery which unites our life with Him, we receive the gift of the Holy Spirit and come to know the Father. In gathering for the Eucharist, we celebrate the presence of the Lord among us as we recall the mighty actions of God through which He seeks the salvation of all and draws us all towards unity. In communion with the Lord, we are called to proclaim in both word and deed, here and now, the divine love which heals and reconciles and saves. As the Apostle Paul says: "All this is from God who reconciled us to Himself through Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation" (2 Cor 5:18).

As we commemorate thirty-five years of dialogue between Orthodox and Catholic theologians in North America, we give thanks to God for the opportunity to share in this ministry of reconciliation.

The Orthodox-Catholic Theological Consultation was established in 1965 by the Standing Conference of Canonical Orthodox Bishops in America and the National Conference of Catholic Bishops. Since 1997, the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops has also been a co-sponsor. The establishment of this consultation reflected the decisions of the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965) and the decisions of the Pan-Orthodox Conferences (1961-1968). This Consultation was the first official dialogue between theologians of the Orthodox and Catholic churches to be established in modern times. It marked a new phase in the relationship between our churches. Since its beginnings, this Consultation has sought to contribute to the ultimate goal of restoration of full communion between our churches, through theological dialogue nurtured by prayer and characterized by mutual respect.

We believe that, through God's grace, our Consultation has already contributed to the growing rapprochement between our two churches. Our discussions and our twenty Agreed Statements have examined both issues which have divided our churches and teaching and practices which have expressed an essential unity of faith. The Consultation has also made recommendations for addressing a variety of challenges that we face together in modern society. We have addressed concerns in the areas of mixed marriages, the spiritual formation of children in Orthodox-Catholic families, and the common commitment to uphold the dignity of human life. Our studies have contributed to our churches' pastoral care of God's people, as well as to the progress of other ecumenical dialogues and to scholarly work on the topic of church unity. Through God's love and mercy, the results of this Consultation have been very positive.

The experience of our Consultation also has provided a valuable background for a number of other forums which bring together representatives of the Orthodox and Catholic churches. We are especially grateful for the important wit-

ness and work of the Joint International Commission for Theological Dialogue between the Roman Catholic Church and the Orthodox Church since 1979, as well as the Joint Committee of Orthodox and Catholic Bishops in the United States since 1981. We appreciate the opportunities we have had to assist in their work, through our responses to the statements of the International Commission and through providing theological advice to the Joint Committee of Bishops.

Moreover, during these thirty-five years we have noticed, in many places, a growth in positive relationships between Orthodox and Catholic clergy and laity. Our churches' various encounters for prayer, study and common witness have done much to eliminate age-old misunderstandings and to deepen mutual respect. We take special note of the pilgrimage of Orthodox and Catholic bishops to Rome and Constantinople in 1995. Similar pilgrimages were made by groups of Orthodox and Catholics from the Boston and Chicago areas. These journeys bear witness to the spirit of reconciliation and the desire for unity that seems, in increasing measure, to characterize the People of God.

The encounter of representatives from both churches for theological conversation and common worship of God expresses, as Patriarch Bartholomew has said, "the firm decision of the two sister churches to remain estranged no longer from one another but to make an effort to prepare by sincere, honest and appropriate means, the way towards the restoration of unity and communion in Christ, for the glory of the all-powerful God and the salvation of his people everywhere" (1993).

### **Reaffirming Our Common Commitment to Restoring Full Communion**

As our dialogue completes its thirty-fifth year, the members of the Orthodox-Catholic Consultation in North America



take this opportunity to reaffirm the importance of the ecumenical commitment and witness of our churches. We especially reaffirm the significance of theological dialogue between the Orthodox and Catholic churches, which seeks the restoration of full communion based upon the profession of the apostolic faith, and expressed in eucharistic sharing and concelebration.

We are convinced that a unique relationship exists between our churches in spite of our division. This relationship is rooted in the fact that we continue to proclaim and to share the essential elements of the apostolic faith. Over the years, our own discussions in North America and our Agreed Statements on such critical topics as the Eucharist, the Church, the Pastoral Office and Baptism bear witness to this affirmation. It is for this very reason that in recent times the Catholic and Orthodox churches have been described as “sister churches.”

The bonds that continue to unite our sister churches are powerfully expressed when – together or separately – we worship the Father through Christ in the Spirit, and honor those who are close to God. While we have become separated as churches, our union with Christ and His saints has remained an unbreakable bond of faith, hope and love. Through the life of both our churches, we share a special bond with Mary, the Virgin Mother of God, and with the other saints who surround us as a “cloud of witnesses” (Heb 12:1). Among them, both Orthodox and Catholics are especially mindful of the countless martyrs of the twentieth century who have shed their blood in common witness to Christ, the Savior.

Supported by the examples and prayers of these faithful witnesses, we cannot overlook the difficult issues which continue to divide us and prevent the restoration of full communion between the Orthodox Church and the Catholic Church. The disputed points dividing our churches are serious and demand our continuing attention. Among these, we feel es-

pecially that issues related to conciliarity, primacy and the exercise of authority require much deeper theological reflection both within our churches and in our bilateral dialogues. Pope John Paul II himself has recognized the difficulties which the papacy presents to many, and has repeatedly invited theological reflection from all Christian traditions on this critical topic (eg., *Ut Unum Sint* nrs. 95-96).

The relationships between our churches today are very different from even thirty-five years ago, when our Consultation began. Many of the issues that divide Orthodox and Catholics date back centuries. They often reflected significantly different perspectives on scripture and tradition, and were frequently compounded by tragic historical events and bitter memories. Yet, as we examine these issues today, it is clear that our context is very different. We are no longer strangers to one another. Isolation has given way to regular contacts, especially here in North America. The prayer of Our Lord for the unity of His followers (John 17:21) rings urgently in our ears. The prayers of faithful people for the unity of the churches are bearing fruit in our meetings, and in the way we approach the difficult issues that still divide us.

We believe that, with the guidance of the Spirit, the issues which continue to divide us are not beyond resolution. We are convinced that the Lord is calling us not only to speak honestly about our differences, but also to find resolutions to them which are loving, truthful and salutary. With this in mind, we echo the words of Pope John Paul II and the late Patriarch Dimitrios: "Seeking only the glory of God through the accomplishment of His will, we state anew our resolute determination to do everything possible to hasten the day when full communion will be reestablished between the Catholic Church and the Orthodox Church, and when we will be at last able to concelebrate the divine Eucharist" (1979).

### **The Importance of Dialogue**

We are aware that the ecumenical enterprise is considered highly suspect in some circles within both our churches. Indeed, a professed anti-ecumenism is the hallmark of some uncanonical Orthodox bodies, and similar ways of thinking have a significant following within the canonical Orthodox churches as well. Within the Catholic Church, despite the affirmation of the central importance of ecumenical dialogue expressed by the Second Vatican Council as well as by hierarchical and theological leadership on both world and regional levels, there are still groups which remain apathetic towards, or even directly opposed to the spirit of ecumenism.

Even though on the surface these Catholic and Orthodox groups which oppose ecumenical dialogue appear to have diametrically opposed theological beliefs, there are certain underlying characteristics that they hold in common. They tend, first of all, to be convinced that theirs is the only true Church, and that outside its visible boundaries there can be nothing but error and confusion. Thus there is the tendency to see the world in black and white: there is either the Church in its fullness, or there is utter darkness. This is usually coupled with the conviction that "the world," along with other Christian churches and world religions, is unrelentingly hostile to the one Church, which stands in radical contradiction to it. In this way of thinking, to enter into dialogue with other Christian bodies is to run the risk of exposing the Church to the possibility of compromise or syncretism, and even to the loss of the Christian faith itself. According to this view, the only acceptable form of Christian dialogue is to proclaim the truth one possesses, in the hope that the others will recognize their errors and return to the one Church.

We recognize that some concerns of these adversaries of ecumenism have a certain merit. The Christian faith is indeed a precious gift from God, and cannot in any way be

negotiated or compromised. Moreover, both the Catholic and Orthodox Churches have a strong sense of possessing, as ecclesial bodies, the fullness of truth and the means of salvation. And yet we do not believe that this implies for either church that other Christian communions necessarily are devoid of truth and grace.

One of the basic principles of ecumenical dialogue is to make a distinction between the content of faith and the words in which that faith is expressed. Since human words can never exhaust the divine mystery, our effort in dialogue is to look beyond what appear to be contradictory verbal formulas to the faith that underlies them, to determine whether or not those formulas are witnessing to the same faith in different ways. Thus ecumenical dialogue, far from compromising the faith of either party, is an effort to rediscover and rearticulate the common faith that unites us in the same Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior. Our conviction is that dialogue is not the abandonment of the truth of the Christian faith but rather an attempt to deepen together our understanding of that truth, free from the polemics of the past, by listening to the witness of the one truth that is given by our two traditions. Far from encouraging relativism, genuine dialogue begins with an immersion in one's own tradition and a desire to share its richness with others for the sake of the salvation of the world.

### **The Challenge Before Us**

Recent statements by Pope John Paul II and Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew have forcefully reaffirmed this commitment to ecumenical dialogue on behalf of their churches. The recent visit of Pope John Paul II to Romania and his meeting with Patriarch Teoctist was a memorable occasion which further strengthened the commitment of our churches to reconciliation and visible unity. Both the Catholic Church

and the Orthodox Church are committed to the process of Christian reconciliation and the visible unity of the churches, for the sake of the world and for the glory of God.

At the same time, we also recognize that in recent years the relationship between our churches has been severely strained in many places. The positive accomplishments of recent decades have been, on some occasions, set aside, and old animosities have resurfaced. Within parts of Eastern Europe, the reestablishment of religious freedom after a period of intense repression by various Communist regimes has led to disputes between Catholics and Orthodox involving not only church teachings but also property and social rights. Accusations of proselytism and misunderstandings regarding episcopal appointments have rekindled old hostilities. Sadly, these events have been compounded at times by insufficient communication between our hierarchies. In addition, those who oppose the dialogue between our churches have, in some cases, intentionally distorted the truth about what those churches believe and how they live.

Mindful of these facts, this Consultation wishes to express the following convictions, not only for the sake of our own churches but also for all those involved in the ecumenical movement:

- We believe that the quest for the unity of Christians and the restoration of the visible unity of the churches is rooted in the very actions of God who "desires everyone to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth" (1Tim 2:4). As Catholics and Orthodox, we profess our faith in the Triune God who loves, heals, forgives and reconciles. Christ has come to break down the barriers caused by sin and to restore us to fellowship with the Father through the Holy Spirit. As Catholics and Orthodox who seek to follow Christ through the preaching and sacraments of His Church, we are called to live a life which bears witness to the healing actions of our God. We are called to be "ambassadors of Christ" (2 Cor

5:20), proclaiming the Gospel of reconciliation in our words and through our deeds, within our churches, our families and our society.

- The historic divisions within Christianity have genuinely and seriously wounded the life of our churches over the centuries. Our appreciation of the apostolic faith in all its richness and fullness has been distorted by our divisions. Our understanding of the Church and its scripture, sacraments, ministry, witness and mission has been narrowed and tainted by the divisive theological debates of the past. The historic divisions of the churches have led in many cases to diverse emphases and perspectives in doctrine and ethics, which have not always been complementary.

- Church divisions reflecting divergent teachings do not honor God or help to proclaim the Gospel to all nations (Matt 28:19). How can we proclaim a God of reconciliation and be disunited among ourselves? How can we speak to the nations of the earth of the need for peace and unity and be disunited as churches? The division among the churches is a scandal that impedes the proclamation of the Gospel in the world today. Sadly, the divisions of the churches often contribute to bitter divisions within families and national cultures.

- The process of reconciliation of the churches, however, is not merely a matter of goodwill; it requires solid and consistent theological reflection. In order for this theological reflection to bear good fruit, it must be rooted in scripture and tradition and nurtured by prayer. It must be oriented toward the needs of God's people today. Our reconciliation requires a theology which is truly life-giving and which serves the Author of life.

In this Consultation, our common study has enabled us to view difficult issues from a variety of perspectives. In so doing, we have sought together to make a distinction between the faith of the Church and the historical explications of that faith. We have also been guided by the experience of the

Church of the first millennium where a diversity of theological expression and liturgical practice was generally able to enrich Christian faith throughout the world.

As Catholics and Orthodox, we honor those before us who boldly and creatively taught the apostolic faith, often in the face of heresies. They sought to maintain the unity of the churches and, where necessary, to heal the divisions between the churches; their desire to teach the apostolic faith free from error was complemented by their desire to maintain the unity of the churches. They were ready, when necessary, to find new terminology which expressed the faith more precisely and which could reconcile divisions.

The process of reconciliation requires from us, as well, that our churches be engaged in genuine renewal, which aims at bearing witness more clearly to the presence of the Risen Lord in our midst. Trusting in the guidance of the Holy Spirit, both our churches are called to examine our worship, our teaching and preaching, and our exercise of authority, so that the message of the Gospel may be proclaimed clearly in all we say and in all we do.

We recognize that theological discussion between the Orthodox and Catholic churches, and our gradual growth towards reconciliation, takes place within the broader context of the ecumenical movement. Both churches view the ecumenical movement primarily as a means through which all the churches of the divided Christian family are seeking to restore their visible unity in accordance with the apostolic faith. From our perspective, we are convinced that the ecumenical movement must always be centered upon Christ and his Gospel, as that Gospel has been proclaimed through twenty centuries. It must serve the churches in their quest for the restoration of visible unity in accordance with the apostolic faith. We acknowledge the important work of various other bilateral and multilateral dialogues and other expressions of the ecumenical movement. Many of these dialogues

have contributed to our own work, particularly through their renewed attention to the doctrine of the Holy Trinity and its relationship to an ecclesiology of communion. Several of these other dialogues have reached agreement on significant topics. Now, in some cases, their conclusions and recommendations are being implemented and incorporated into church life. Our own Consultation has been inspired by their example, and enriched by their theological contributions. We are challenged to make our own theological work equally meaningful to the faithful of all Christians.

### **Conclusion**

The ultimate goal of dialogue between the Catholic Church and the Orthodox Church is restoration of full communion. We recognize that this is a gradual process. Just as our alienation took place over the course of time, so also our reconciliation, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, is taking place gradually. In order to be faithful to Our Lord, this process must be rooted in the Gospel and nurtured by prayer for unity. It must be fostered by theological dialogue, and expressed in acts of love and mutual forgiveness. As members of sister churches which are responsible for upholding the apostolic faith, we cannot seek the victory of one tradition over another. Rather, we seek the victory of Christ over our divisions, for the sake of the salvation of all. To Him be glory together with His eternal Father and His all-holy, good and life-giving Spirit, now and forever and unto ages of ages. Amen.



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## **St. John Chrysostom: Preacher on the Old Testament<sup>1</sup>**

ROBERT C. HILL

We are in the fortunate position, thanks to the remarkable resources provided by stenographers in the early Church,<sup>2</sup> of being able to read the homilies delivered by John, preacher in Antioch and later bishop in Constantinople, given the name Chrysostom for his golden-mouthed eloquence in the century after his death in 407. His extant homilies (we do not have them all) number over eight hundred, the bulk of them devoted to commentary on the Bible, of which over a hundred and fifty deal with books of the Old Testament. Had he enjoyed the luxury, like Augustine in the West,<sup>3</sup> of devoting the last years of his life to consolidating his literary remains, we would have had many more (especially as he would have avoided trouble and lived longer than his brief thirty-year ministry); but his hectic involvement in metropolitan affairs in Constantinople made that kind of withdrawal impossible.

As it is, however, this imposing legacy not only elevated him to eminent status as one of the great doctors of the Church, but left us in the West with an invaluable insight into the way the Bible was read in the fourth century school of Antioch. Recent testimonies to this achievement come to us from two women scholars – a significant fact in itself, considering Chrysostom's general neglect of any women attending his homilies in the churches in those cities.<sup>4</sup> Mlle. Malingrey, a lifelong student of John, refers to him as "the most illustrious representative of the school of Antioch, whose exegesis is based on minute explanation of

the texts,”<sup>5</sup> while Beryl Smalley concedes “he was by far the best-known representative of Antiochene principles in the West and, at the same time, the author who could teach his readers least about Antiochene exegesis.”<sup>6</sup> While there is no question that as a preacher Chrysostom ranks above his peers Diodore of Tarsus, Theodore of Mopsuestia and Theodoret of Cyrus in popular estimation,<sup>7</sup> we shall have to see whether those conflicting nuances about his exegetical skills are warranted, and how they affected his preaching to his congregations and won him his sobriquet Golden Mouth.

Since the occasion calls for attention to Chrysostom’s preaching, perhaps we might consider his exercise of this ministry under four headings: as *biblical commentator* (in this case on the Old Testament), as *homilist*, as *orator*, and as *pastor*. Hopefully, all our preachers, at least in the course of the liturgy of the Word, where (as in Chrysostom’s churches) the Word has already been proclaimed to the congregation before the preacher rises to speak, bring to their task skills in each of these roles. You may differ as to whether oratory is a prerequisite for a good homily, but you would probably expect a preacher to break the bread of the Word to you in a competent manner that revealed a sound biblical background, in a substantial homily that left you uplifted and not bored, bewildered or exhausted, and that touched your life and gave you some spiritual guidance. Chrysostom, we shall see, won his reputation for meeting all these criteria, with some oratorical skills to boot.

### CHRYSOSTOM AS SCRIPTURAL COMMENTATOR

His solid grounding in the Old Testament, evidenced in extant homilies commenting on the Psalms, on the book of Genesis (several times, as it was Lenten reading during an eight-week Lent), on some of the Prophets and parts of the historical books, was gained in the *asketêrion* (or seminary)

presided over by Diodore, who could claim to be founder of the exegetical method practiced in Antioch.<sup>8</sup> To judge also from the wide-ranging reference to the Scriptures that is a feature of Chrysostom's homilies, it was a comprehensive grounding, though not providing him with skills considered necessary for exegetes today, such as a knowledge of Hebrew, the language of the Old Testament, or a critical interest in the history of its text.<sup>9</sup> Still, his congregations stood to receive rich scriptural fare at his hands – sometimes, especially in his relative youth in preaching on the Psalms, at risk of surfeit from immature excess, as in his treating of Psalm 4, where his commentary is replete with allusions to other parts of the Bible.

*Be angry, and do not sin; what you say in your heart, repent of at bedtime* (v.4). What I said before I repeat now. That is to say, since his intention is to lead them to knowledge of God, he rids their spirit of ailments. He knows, you see, that a corrupt life proves an obstacle to elevated thinking. So that is what Paul too was suggesting in saying, "I could not speak to you as spiritual persons but as carnal persons;" and again, "As though to infants in Christ I fed you milk, not solid food" (1 Cor 3:1-2), and again, "On this matter we have much to say that is hard to explain, since you are slow to understand" (Heb 5:11). Isaiah as well: "This people seek me, and desire to know my ways, like a people that have practised righteousness and not forsaken my ordinance" (Isa 58:2). And Hosea: "Sow seeds of righteousness for yourselves, light the light of knowledge" (Hos 10:12 [Greek]). Christ in his teaching said, "Whoever does shoddy things hates the light and does not move to the light" (John 3:20); and again, "How can you have faith when you accept praise from one another and do not seek praise from the One who alone is God?" (John 5:44), and again, "His parents said this because they were afraid of the Jews, fearing they would be put out of the synagogue" (John 9:22), and again, "Many came to believe in him, and on account of the Pharisees did not confess their faith" (John 12:42).

In all these cases you could see a corrupt life proving an impediment to committed belief.<sup>10</sup>

Scriptural familiarity is one thing; moderation comes with experience, a preacher finds.

While Diodore may have faulted the immature overkill here, he would have been gratified with the profundity of the theology of the Word that his ex-pupil developed in the course of his ministry as biblical commentator, without – it would seem – much help from his mentor. Listeners to readings from the Old Testament in the course of the liturgy can sometimes feel mystified by the obscurity of the material – hence the need for a good commentator. A resourceful preacher, however, will do more than simply explain obscure references to places, times and individuals if the homily is to be more than a mere history lesson. “It is the Lord who speaks,” as the prophets often repeat; and the congregation must appreciate this gift of divine communication. No preacher has ever imparted such a profound sense of this divine considerateness (συγκατάβασις in Chrysostom’s term) manifested in the human language of these God-given Scriptures – as also in sacred history and, pre-eminently, in the Incarnation of the Word in the person of Jesus – as has Chrysostom, so that the term becomes his personal signature.<sup>11</sup> We accept as a considerate gift from God, taking account of our limitations, the fact that he engages in converse with us, ὁμιλία, both in our language and through the stories of Old Testament characters, who are sometimes saints, sometimes scoundrels. In view of this converse, we should treat the text with respect.

Chrysostom employs this term συγκατάβασις countless times, but in two places his profound theology comes through most forcefully. Some time before Lent in 388 in Antioch he delivered six homilies on the vocation of the prophet Isaiah, beginning in the opening verses of Isaiah 6 with the vocation of the prophet when Uzziah was king. But

mention of Uzziah prompts Chrysostom to move soon to contrast the reverence of the seraphim in those verses, crying out “Holy, Holy, Holy,” with what was to him a flagrant act of irreverence and temerity, the behavior of the king recounted in 2 Chronicles 26. Uzziah had presumed to usurp the right of the high priest to enter the Holy of Holies, for which he was struck with leprosy, and should have been expelled by the people, since he was leprous and therefore unclean. Confusing this incident with the punishment given at an earlier time for priestly abuse under Eli in 1 Samuel 3 (even good preachers can have a lapse of memory), Chrysostom sees justice in the punishment of the people’s failure to expel Uzziah by an interruption in divine communication, ὁμιλία, through cessation of inspiration of prophets.

Since they allowed him that liberty, therefore, God turned away from them and put a stop to the charism of inspiration (προφητεία) – and rightly so: in return for their breaking his law and being reluctant to expel the unclean one, he brought the charism of inspiration to a halt. “The word was precious at that time, and there was no inspired utterance” (1 Sam 3:1), that is, God was not speaking through the prophets: the Spirit through whom they made utterance was not inspiring them since they kept the unclean one, the Spirit’s grace not being active in the case of unclean people. Hence he kept his distance, he did not reveal himself to the inspired authors; he was silent and remained hidden ... You refuse? I shall have no dealings with you, either.<sup>12</sup>

The Scriptures are a divine gift of communication with us human beings (Chrysostom is saying), God inspiring the biblical authors; it is in his power to deprive us of this gift. Not only does he communicate with us in ὁμιλία, but in doing so he takes account of our limitations by using our language and ways of speaking and writing – in poetry and prose, in songs and stories, in history and proverb, in laws and prophetic oracles. He has also engaged in personal dealings with the

patriarchs in the course of history. Furthermore, this considerateness (συγκατάβασις) has gone to the extremes in his actually taking human form in the Incarnation of the Word in Jesus: what could be more considerate than that? It is in a homily on Genesis 32 dealing with Jacob's struggling with the angel that he moves from one form of considerateness to this pre-eminent form (in his lack of Hebrew he wrongly interprets the name given Jacob then, Israel, to mean "vision of God").

Do you see how the Lord shows considerateness for our human limitations in all he does and in arranging everything in a way that gives evidence of his characteristic love? Don't be surprised, dearly beloved, at the extent of his considerateness; rather, remember that with the patriarchs as well, when he was sitting by the oak tree, he came in human form as the good man's guest in the company of the angels (Gen 18), giving us a premonition from on high at the beginning that he would one day take human form to liberate all human nature by this means from the tyranny of the devil and lead us to salvation. At that time, however, since it was the very early stages, he appeared to each of them in the guise of an apparition, as he says himself through the inspired authors, "I multiplied visions and took various likenesses in the works of the inspired authors" (Hos 12:10).

But when he deigned to take on the form of a slave (Phil 2:7) and receive our first fruits, he donned our flesh, not in appearance or in seeming, but in reality. He brought himself to undergo all our experiences, to be born of a woman, to become an infant, to be wrapped in swaddling clothes, to be fed at the breast, and to undergo everything for this purpose, that the truth of the divine plan might be given credence and the mouths of heretics be stopped ... After all, if he had not taken on our flesh in reality, neither would he have been crucified, nor would he have died, been buried, and risen again. But if he had not risen, the whole purpose of the divine plan would have been thwarted. Do you see into what extreme absurdity those people fall who are unwilling to

take their cue from the norm of Sacred Scripture but rather have complete confidence in their own reasoning?<sup>13</sup>

It is a wonderfully dignified understanding of Scripture as an incarnation of the Word akin to the person of Jesus, helping Chrysostom's listeners to appreciate its human character, warts and all, as well as its divine origin. Though he will proceed to go through Genesis and the Psalms verse by verse, clarifying obscure expressions, he has thus laid the groundwork of a theological understanding of what the Old Testament really represents. Many a preacher in my experience never gets round to doing that.

### CHRYSOSTOM AS HOMILIST

A good homilist, of course, cannot be content with laying a theological groundwork for commentary on Old Testament texts. There is need also to break the bread of the Word into digestible pieces. Communication, ὁμιλία – our word “homily,” after all – involves two parties; many a preacher has succeeded only in conversing with himself, not drawing the congregation into a vital relationship. Even if vocal intervention by them is not in order, neither is a style of homily in which the church might as well be empty for all the engagement that occurs – or fails to occur – between preacher and congregation. Chrysostom was never one to treat the congregation like inert, passive objects; not only were they expected to attend regularly – and they were – but their response was welcomed. They *were* expected to attend, and he took note if they were absent, treating it as a personal affront, especially if they had opted for something less worthy. When he began a series of Lenten homilies on the whole of Genesis, perhaps in the late 380s in Antioch, he was extremely mortified to discover that some of his congregation went missing to attend horse racing, one of the amusements



for which Antiochenes had a reputation. He begins the sixth homily in the series in a real fit of depression, which he allows to settle on them: “I want to take up the usual line of teaching, yet I hesitate and hang back; a cloud of despair has settled upon me, and has confused and upset my train of thought – not simply despair but anger as well,” and so he goes on, really playing on their sense of guilt. He next quotes Proverbs 26:11: “The person who turns away from his sin and then goes back to it is like a dog returning to its vomit,” and from there on it’s all guns blazing: “What could be worse than this madness? What’s the good of fasting, tell me? What’s the use of coming along here? Who could fail to upbraid you and commiserate with me – upbraid you, because everything you have amassed you’ve squandered in one fell swoop?”<sup>14</sup> And so he continues for half an hour before resuming the Genesis text. That’s what good preachers do, let the congregation know how they feel, speak from the heart, not beating about the bush. I warrant they did not go missing again, especially as he let them know he was aware that there was more going on at racetracks in Antioch than betting on horses.

Not only were the members of his congregation expected to attend, however, but they were commended for responding: *ὁμιλία* required it. In an earlier Lent, in 386, he had given a shorter series on Genesis we call sermons to differentiate them from the sixty-seven homilies; and at the end of the sixth sermon he had recommended them to go back to their homes, which he calls the domestic church, and ponder his words about the close relationship of the sexes outlined in Genesis 2:23: “Let us take all this to heart, then, dearly beloved, and on returning home let us serve a double meal, one of food and the other of sacred reading; while the husband reads what has been said, let the wife learn and the children listen, and let not even servants be deprived of the chance to listen. Turn your house into a church; you are, in fact, even

responsible for the salvation both of the children and of the servants.”<sup>15</sup> Apparently, if we can believe his words at the opening of the next evening’s homily, they all burst into applause at that point, because he begins next time with that metaphor of the two meals, material and spiritual.

Yesterday I urged your good selves to remember what was said, and in the evening serve a double meal, adding to the food a feast from the words. Well, then, did you do it – serve a double meal? I know you did, partaking not only of the former but also of the latter. In fact, in your concern for the lesser one, you would not have been likely to neglect the better one, the latter being better than the former: while the hands of cooks assembled the former, tongues of inspired authors prepared the latter ... Your serving the one with the other, then, I am aware of, not from asking your attendant, not your servant, but the messenger clearer than they. Which one was that? The applause for my words, the commendation for my teaching: when I said yesterday, Let each of you turn your home into a church, you burst into loud applause, indicating satisfaction with what was said.<sup>16</sup>

Like all preachers, he appreciated their sense of satisfaction with the way he had brought the Genesis text into touch with their daily lives beyond the church, and told them so. And like all good preachers, he conveyed his thinking with apposite imagery – in this case the two meals or courses (a figure he will frequently employ), at other times the image of physician and patient, miner digging for gems, and in the eighth sermon in that short series Scripture as an edict from the emperor, as in other places it is a letter from God delivered by Moses or David. Perhaps not original imagery, but a means of engaging with the listeners’ experience.

A further asset Chrysostom brings as a homilist is his being a shrewd observer of society; he is no recluse, unaware of the way people behave, and so can appeal to his congregation’s daily experience, as he was aware of goings on at the

racetrack. He tells them that, unlike their venturing into the ἄγορά and finding not a friend in sight, in church they are all friends. Not only that, but unlike the scurrilous gossip of the ἄγορά, in church “all useless talk is expelled, only spiritual instruction is allowed in.”

It is not only on the score of number that this congregation is better than the crowds in the marketplace, but also for the actual nature of the communication: crowds meeting in the marketplace and sitting together with one another in a circle often talk about nonsensical matters, get involved in idle chatter and give voice to sentiments unbecoming them. It is our custom most of the time, you see, to show greater interest in prying into other people’s affairs and busying ourselves with them. The fact that it is a dangerous and risky business, to give vent and give ear to such sentiments and be taken in by them, and that many storms are often generated in homes through such gatherings, I pass over for the time being; but no one would deny that all that talk is nonsensical, silly and worldly, and that no spiritual topic would ever be readily raised in such an assembly.<sup>17</sup>

No one could argue with that; the preacher obviously knew the score, speaking from experience – *their* experience.

No matter how good a homilist is at catching the attention of his congregation at the outset of his homily, the challenge is to hold it throughout. Keeping to the biblical text read out beforehand is the best way to do this; an open Bible can be a useful discipline, especially if the homilist has a tendency to stray from the text. Chrysostom did have this weakness; in a homily on Psalm 42 (outside the longer series of fifty-eight homilies on the Psalms),<sup>18</sup> which begins, “As the deer longs for springs of water,” which the congregation would sing as a responsorium (ὑπακοή), he takes some time to focus on his theme, and never succeeds in getting beyond the opening two verses. On the other hand, we are grateful to his going off the track in his fourth Lenten sermon, because

his audience that evening likewise got bored and were distracted by the church lamplighter, resulting in an outburst by the preacher (himself the cause of the problem), who thus went on to deliver one of his most beautiful analogies of the illuminating Word.

Wake up there, and dispel indifference. Why do I say this? Because while we are discoursing to you on the Scriptures, you instead are averting your eyes from us and fixing them on the lamps and the man lighting the lamps. What extreme indifference is this, to ignore us and attend to him! Here am I, lighting the fire that comes from the Scriptures, and the light of its teaching is burning on our tongue. This light is brighter and better than that light: we are not kindling a wick saturated in oil, like him: souls bedewed with piety we set alight with the desire for listening.<sup>19</sup>

It would be unwise of preachers generally to count on such a flash of brilliance in the event of a distracted congregation; better to keep to the text of the day. Wordiness can also be a problem to a preacher; Chrysostom became notorious for his *makrologia*, some of his homilies on the Psalms lasting for an hour or more – perhaps not a model for today’s preachers.<sup>20</sup>

### CHRYSTOM AS ORATOR

It helped, of course, if the preacher was also an orator – at least in those times; and in Chrysostom his congregation knew they had found one. Hence the applause, and hence his eventual sobriquet Golden Mouth. His credentials were good: he had studied rhetoric at the feet of Antioch’s official rhetorician Libanius, we are told by the historian Socrates,<sup>21</sup> and had been earmarked by him as his successor when he retired, but we are grateful that the young John took another path. It has been debated which of the classical orators Chrysostom most resembles, Demosthenes or Gorgias,

the latter seeming more to be his model. But one analyst rightly observes, "Like Demosthenes he was not afraid to speak out, challenging the wealthy and even the (imperial) court itself when necessary ... Chrysostom most resembles Demosthenes in his forcefulness and courage, and in the vision of his moral leadership, a quality all too rare among the rhetors of that age."<sup>22</sup> There is no questioning the righteous indignation that moves him to berate the idle rich in commentary on Psalm 49, a text he spoke on more than once, in Antioch as part of his long series on the Psalter and in Constantinople as the subject of two homilies. In one of the latter he would have made the congregation cringe when he challenged those present, probably like many a preacher, for the vulgar opulence of the absent:

What reason is there for you to have a gilded savage as your servant? What value is there in it? What good for your soul? What help to your body? What sort of introduction to your house? Quite the contrary: absurd expense, an outlay reeking of foppishness, a basis for licentiousness, a schooling in vice, an occasion for crude and promiscuous living, ruination of the soul, a way leading to countless evils. Couches inlaid with silver, gold-spangled, footstools and basins made of the same material, loud laughter – how does that help you get your life in order? What improvement did that do to you, or your partner, or anyone else in the house?<sup>23</sup>

He returns to the charge as bishop in the imperial city with similar rhetorical skills – though one would like to remind him, as we would many a preacher, that, after all, these people live in the world, not in an *asketêrion*; it is for lay people "John traces the way," Mlle. Malingrey claims,<sup>24</sup> though at times his criticism of their worldliness seems unrealistic, as in this assault on them.

Where do you now spend your time, mortal that you are?  
In the marketplace. Amassing what kind of things? Slime

and mire. Why go to the trouble of amassing money that perishes, covetousness that proves tyrannical, influence that perishes, a surfeit of earthly cares, here today and gone tomorrow? Why pick the blooms and ignore the fruit? Why run after the shadow and not lay hold of the reality? Why chase what perishes and not seek what abides?<sup>25</sup>

It is as well that later in that homily he does abandon rhetoric to draw the necessary distinction for his lay listeners, if unconvincingly: “I say this to find fault, not with riches, as I have stated countless times, but with those who use a good thing badly; money is fine for good deeds.” One wonders if John’s tirade against rich women in particular, perhaps with the empress in mind, contributed to her vendetta against him and his exile and early death.

Oratory, then, can be a mixed blessing in a preacher. It does, however, make those long Psalm homilies more bearable for a weary congregation, and more interesting even for today’s reader. When Chrysostom came to Psalm 47 and the verse, “The Lord, the Most High, is fearsome” (v.2), he did not pass quickly by, like his mentor Diodore and his fellow student Theodore; instead, he launched into one of his finest oratorical crescendos that must have vastly impressed the congregation.

Hence the psalmist says, *Most High, fearsome*. Rather, on the contrary, what could anyone adequately say in describing that day,  
when he sends his angels everywhere throughout the world,  
when all things tremble,  
when the earth is confused to be surrendering the dead in its keeping,  
when the myriad bodies rise,  
when the sky shrinks like a shrunken veil,  
when that fearful tribunal is established,  
when the rivers of fire are made to flow,  
when the books are opened,  
when he makes public each one’s deeds done in darkness,

when retribution and punishment are unbearable,  
 when powers are menacing,  
 when swords are drawn,  
 when the way leads down to hell,  
 when all rank counts for naught - kings, generals, supremos, viceroys,  
 when a host of angels appears,  
 when ranks of martyrs, prophets, apostles, priests, monks,  
 when rewards are past telling, trophies and wreaths,  
 when the good things surpass all understanding?<sup>26</sup>

The pulses would have been racing that day in Antioch, and perhaps applause rang out again – and rightly so, if applause is what a homilist is after.

### CHRYSTOM AS PASTOR

Homilists, however, are generally also pastors, as Chrysostom was, and pastors have responsibilities to meet. It was because of those pastoral responsibilities that he engaged in a lifelong program of preaching, introduction to the Old Testament ranking high on his list of priorities, to judge from the bulk of his extant works. It was because of his pastoral priorities that he spoke daily on books like Genesis and the Psalms year after year, especially when he was preacher in Antioch; we have at least three series of Lenten homilies on the former and scores of homilies on the Psalms. When becoming bishop in Constantinople, and thus being required to speak second in the liturgy, he may not always have been well-prepared, the impression we get from a homily there on Isaiah 45:6-7;<sup>27</sup> but through his inability to withdraw from ecclesiastical and civic affairs, he was clearly a very busy man. Even as a newly-ordained priest in Antioch in 387, when he had just started a third Lenten series only to interrupt it when the emperor's portrait was vandalized by a local mob, he interspersed his daily homilies (thus known now as the Homilies on the Statues)<sup>28</sup> with news of Bishop Flavian's

hurried trip to the capital to seek clemency for the citizens. And during the crisis Chrysostom delivered a further short series of three homilies, purportedly to do with David and Saul and known as that today, but in effect devoted to the political fallout from the incident; the forgiving David is presented along with the malicious Saul as a paradigm for imperial forgiveness of an admittedly guilty Antioch.

I mean, there is nothing remarkable in not taking vengeance on an enemy who had simply done you wrong; but to be in a position to do away with this person when he had fallen into his hands, on whom many great kindnesses were conferred and who had endeavored to do away with his benefactor on many an occasion in response to those great benefactions, and to forgive him and snatch him from the schemes of others, though he was likely to set his mind to the same things again – what great degree of sound values did he fail to achieve?<sup>29</sup>

In capitalizing on this current situation, however, the preacher does not forsake his responsibilities to his congregation, even if hoping the emperor elsewhere might take note. The three homilies are also directed at a more generally applicable range of moral topics, as often happened with Chrysostom's biblical homilies, and as one would expect of a pastor. In closing the first of them, he tells the men – and, as observed before, one gets the impression that women are usually not present, or not acknowledged – to go home and study the scriptural text further, because Scripture is basically moral and hagiographical in character (perhaps not a view we would endorse).

Let us not only write this on our minds but also repeatedly discuss it with one another in our get-togethers; let us constantly revive the memory of this story both with our wives and with the children. In fact, if you want to talk about a king, see, there is a king here; if about soldiers, about a household, about political affairs, you will find a



great abundance of these things in the Scriptures. These narratives bring the greatest benefit: it is impossible – impossible, I say – for a soul nourished on these stories ever to manage to fall victim to passion.<sup>30</sup>

Another series of five homilies delivered soon after the resolution of the Antioch crisis, nominally dealing with the birth of Samuel and known today by the name of his prayerful mother Hannah, also moves from its historical reference to treat of moral topics, such as education of the young, prayer and divine providence.<sup>31</sup> Series of other homilies by this pastor also depart from the biblical text to develop similar topics – almsgiving, riches and extravagance, the dangers of the theatre and other secular amusements, disorder in church, hospitality, sloth and indifference.

What some readers look for today in biblical commentary of that period is attention to spirituality in the sense of personal direction with a view to developing one's relationship with Christ. And in the Antioch Fathers, even though to a lesser extent in Chrysostom, they can be disappointed. He does lecture on what he calls "the art of prayer" in commentary on Psalms 4 and 7, but it comes out like a shopping list or medical prescription.

Being heard happens in this fashion: first, of course, worthiness to receive something; then, praying in accordance with God's laws; third, persistence; fourth, asking nothing earthly; fifth, seeking things to our real benefit; sixth, contributing everything of our own.<sup>32</sup>

What particularly rankles with modern readers is the mention of those first and last requirements, "worthiness to receive something," and "contributing everything of our own." The impression comes through that we can influence God and win divine grace; and Antioch can often be quoted for that imbalance. As a pastor, Chrysostom (with his fellows) is insistent that the human element in moral and spiri-

tual development should not be downplayed, as also in the Scriptures and in the person of Jesus; other schools of theology had tended to do that, and Antioch is suspicious of such spiritualizing, as all pastors are.<sup>33</sup> But he is also insistent on the need for divine grace, even if we rarely see him in the role of spiritual guru.<sup>34</sup>

After all, how many roles can be expected of a preacher on the Old Testament? If he provides us with an adequate – not to say profound – theology of scriptural revelation in his commentary on readings in the liturgy and avoids the fault of “mangling the limbs of Scripture” (as Chrysostom puts it),<sup>35</sup> if his homilies engage with the congregation’s lives and experience and invoke a response, and if he sets preaching on the Old Testament high on his pastoral priorities and directs the text to the lives of his listeners, can we fault him if he declines to play guru and if his oratorical skills do not measure up to those of a Golden Mouth, not to mention Demosthenes? Chrysostom’s gifts are perhaps a deterrent here; he clearly excelled as a preacher on the Old Testament, as his congregations’ applause suggests. Perhaps today’s preachers could reflect also that at times his listeners’ attention strayed because of his meandering or exceeding a reasonable length. If we cannot emulate all the gifts of the preacher of Antioch and Constantinople, we may recall that, as Chrysostom himself reminds us, it was with our human limitations in mind that God gave us the Scriptures in the first place.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> The paper was delivered on March 23, 2004 as the annual St. John Chrysostom Lecture at the Holy Cross Greek Orthodox School of Theology, Brookline, MA, to whom the writer expresses his appreciation for the honor of being invited.

<sup>2</sup> Eusebius tells us of the various ranks of stenographers provided for Origen in his dictation and the recording of his homilies (*H.E.* 6, 23;

SC 41.123): "As he dictated, he had available more than seven shorthand writers (ταχύγραφοι), who interchanged with one another at set intervals, and copyists (βιβλιόγραφοι) no fewer in number, as well as girls trained in penmanship (καλλιγραφεῖν)." Cf. J. De Ghellinck, *Patristique et moyen âge: études d'histoire littéraire et doctrinale*, 2 *Introductions et complément à l'étude de la patristique* (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1947), 217; A. Hamman, "Stenografia," in A. Di Berardino, ed., *Dizionario Patristico dell' Antichità Cristiana* 2, (Casale Monferato: Marietti, 1984), 3311; R. C. Hill, "Chrysostom's *Commentary on the Psalms*: Homilies or Tracts?" in *Prayer and Spirituality in the Early Church* 1, ed. P. Allen (Brisbane: Australian Catholic University, 1998), 301-17.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. S. Lancel, *St. Augustine*, (London: SCM, 2002), 458.

<sup>4</sup> The case has been mounted that Antioch churches made particular provision for women worshipers, and that women are sometimes directly (if rhetorically?) addressed by Chrysostom, for example, see W. Mayer, "John Chrysostom: Extraordinary Preacher, Ordinary Audience," in *Preacher and Audience: Studies in Early Christian and Byzantine Homilies*, M. Cunningham, P. Allen, ed., (Leiden: Brill, 1998), 123; "Who Came to Hear John Chrysostom Preach? Recovering a Late Fourth-century Preacher's Audience," *ETL* 76 (2000), 80.

<sup>5</sup> A.-M. Malingrey, "John Chrysostom," in A. Di Berardino, ed., *Encyclopedia of the Early Church* 1, (Edinburgh: James Clark & Co, 1992), 441.

<sup>6</sup> *The Study of the Bible in the Middle Ages*, 3rd ed., (Oxford: Blackwell, 1983), 18.

<sup>7</sup> These other members of the school of Antioch (if we may use the term "school" in the sense of a fellowship of like-minded scholars joined by birth, geography and scholarly principles – not in the local sense in "the school of Caesarea" employed of Origen's refuge by J. Quasten, *Patrology* 2, Westminster MD: Newman, 1960, 121-23) have not left us such an extensive corpus of homiletic material for comparison on this score.

<sup>8</sup> This, at least, is the verdict of his editor J.-M. Olivier, *Diodori Tarsensis Commentarii in Psalmos* 1, *Commentarii in Psalmos I-L* (CCG 6), ciii, who while according Lucian (martyred in 312) the title 'initiateur' of that method, nominates Diodore as 'le véritable fondateur.' Certainly it was Diodore under whose influence Chrysostom fell as a student, though not so markedly and slavishly as his fellow pupil Theodore.

<sup>9</sup> For the limited exegetical skills transmitted by Diodore to his pupils, see my article, "His Master's Voice: Theodore of Mopsuestia on the Psalms," *HeyJ* 44 (2004), 40-53.

<sup>10</sup> PG 55.50 (English translations in the text are those of R. C. Hill).

Cf. Young, *Biblical Exegesis and the Formation of Christian Culture*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 115, on Chrysostom's manner of allusion to Scripture.

<sup>11</sup> The word is sometimes by a lazy calque rendered "condescension," though there is nothing patronizing about it. Such is the version suggested by M. H. Flanagan, *St John Chrysostom's Doctrine of Condescension and Accuracy in the Scriptures*, (Napier, New Zealand [private printing], 1948) (where "accuracy" also inadequately – and commonly – renders a key Antiochene term ἀκρίβεια, "precision"); F. Fabbi, "La 'condiscendenza divina nell' ispirazione biblica secondo S. Giovanni Crisostomo,'" *Bib* 14 (1933), 330-47; B. Vawter, *Biblical Inspiration*, Theological Resources, (London: Hutchinson & Co, 1972), 40, in comparing the term to Origen's συμπεριφορά; J.-M. Leroux, "Johannes Chrysostomus," 121, *TRE* 17, 118-27, where the term is rendered 'Herablassung.' F. Asensio does better in his article, 'El Crisóstomo y su visión de la escritura en la exposición homilética del Génesis,' *EstBib* 32 (1973), 223-55, 329-56. A monograph is being prepared on the term by David Rylaarsdam. Cf. my article, "On Looking Again at *synkatabasis*," *Prudentia* 13, (1981) 3-11.

<sup>12</sup> Homily 4 *In Oziam* (SC 277.174). Cf. Hill, "St John Chrysostom's Teaching on Inspiration in 'Six Homilies on Isaiah,'" *VC* 22 (1968), 19-37.

<sup>13</sup> Homily 58 on Genesis (PG 54.509-510).

<sup>14</sup> PG 53.54-61. Cf. Hill, "On Giving up the Horses for Lent," *Clergy Review* 68 (1983), 105-106.

<sup>15</sup> SC 433.294-96.

<sup>16</sup> SC 433.300-302.

<sup>17</sup> Sermon 6 on Genesis (SC 433.282-84).

<sup>18</sup> PG 55.155-67.

<sup>19</sup> SC 433.238-240.

<sup>20</sup> Cf. G. Bardy, "Jean Chrysostome," *Dictionnaire de théologie catholique*, vol. 8, (Paris: Librairie Letouzey et Ané, 1924), 684, who contrasts Chrysostom's *makrologia* with Augustine's *breviloquium*, the latter needing a quarter hour for what took the former two hours.

<sup>21</sup> *Historia Ecclesiastica* 6, 3 (PG 67.665-668).

<sup>22</sup> P. J. Ryan, "Chrysostom – a derived stylist?" *VC* 36 (1982) 11, 13.

<sup>23</sup> Second Homily on Psalm 49:16, delivered in the Great Church in Constantinople (PG 55.515). Cf. Hill, *St John Chrysostom: Old Testament Homilies*, vol. 3, (Brookline, MA: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 2003), 109.

<sup>24</sup> "John Chrysostom," 441.

<sup>25</sup> First Homily on Psalm 49:16 (PG 55.499). Cf. *Old Testament Homilies*

3, 86.

<sup>26</sup> PG 55.211.

<sup>27</sup> PG 56.141-52. Cf. *Old Testament Homilies* 2, 20-40.

<sup>28</sup> Cf. F. van de Pavard, *The Homilies on the Statues: An Introduction, Orientalia Christiana Analecta* 239, (Rome: Pont. Inst. Orient. Stud.), 1991.

<sup>29</sup> PG 54.678. Cf. *Old Testament Homilies* 1, 11.

<sup>30</sup> PG 54.686. There are features of this concluding parenthesis that are atypical of the series and suggest a different hand at work; cf. my article, "Chrysostom's Homilies on David and Saul," *SVTQ* 44 (2000), 123-41.

<sup>31</sup> PG 54.631-76; cf. my article, "St John Chrysostom's Homilies on Hannah," *SVTQ* 45 (2001), 319-38.

<sup>32</sup> PG 55.85. Cf. Hill, "The Spirituality of Chrysostom's Commentary on the Psalms," *J ECS* 5 (1997), 569-79.

<sup>33</sup> In the view of L. Bouyer, *The Spirituality of the New Testament and the Fathers*, (London: Burns & Oates, 1963), 438, 444, Antioch developed an "asceticism without mysticism" as a "healthy reaction" against a tendency in Alexandria to "find Christian spirituality under its most mystical aspects." One result of Antioch's attempt at balance is that Chrysostom is never nominated in modern manuals of Christian spirituality (for details, see my article, "The Spirituality of Chrysostom's Commentary on the Psalms").

<sup>34</sup> Cf. Hill, "Psalm (41)42: a Classic Text for Antiochene Spirituality," *ITQ* 68 (2003), 25-33.

<sup>35</sup> In his homily on Jeremiah 10:23 (PG 56.153-62) in reference to the common habit of misquoting verses from Scripture to justify moral irresponsibility. Cf. my article, "Norms, Definitions, and Unalterable Doctrines: Chrysostom on Jeremiah," *ITQ* 65 (2000), 335-46.

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Fr. Constantine Terss

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**Constantine Cavarnos. *St. Photios: Philosopher and Theologian***. Belmont, MA: The Institute for Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies, 1998, pp. 84.

The present volume is a study on the great ninth-century Orthodox theologian, Patriarch of Constantinople, Saint Photios. Professor Cavarnos discusses the theology and philosophy of St. Photios the Great. The book is divided into two parts: in the first part, an extensive study, the author deals with Photios as a philosopher. He presents the most important points of St. Photios' philosophy and theology, and in the second part Dr. Cavarnos presents five reviews that deal with the theology and philosophy of this great Patriarch. The objective of Photios is to attain to the knowledge of the "truth."

In the essay regarding Photios as a philosopher Dr. Cavarnos discusses the impact of classical philosophy, that is, Platonism,

Aristotelianism and Stoicism, on this great Church father. He analyzes the position of modern interpreters of Photios' thought, such as Basil Tatakis, K. D. Georgoulis and Milton V. Anastos. All these scholars conclude that Photios was an Aristotelian. Dr. Cavarnos points out that St. Photios used elements of all classical philosophers. However, the Scriptures and Christian doctrine dominate his thought.

From Plato St. Photios adopted the distinction of "sensible things" and "intelligible things," the latter being on a higher level. He also adopted the term 'Demiurge' for God as Creator of the world. Also he adopts the term *anaitios*, that is, God is not the cause of human sinfulness. The responsibility of good and bad lies in the individual and not in God. He also insists on the term "Creator" Who creates everything *ex nihilo*. These and other philosophical doctrines Photios adopts and modifies to be in harmony with the Christian Orthodox Faith.

The author indicates that Photios speaks more extensively about the Aristotelian doctrines so that some scholars mistakenly regard him as Aristotelian. In his work, *The Amphilochia*, Photios deals extensively with the topics "genus" and "species" and especially extensively discusses the "categories" of Aristotle. Dr. Cavarnos points out that Photios devotes more discussion to the categories in order to clarify them. He also points out that the Aristotelian elements of the categories often appear in the writings of St. Photios. These are: 1) distinction between matter and form; 2) distinction between potentiality and actuality; 3) "Man is a rational animal." This latter point is to stress the distinctness of the human being from beasts. However, Photios emphasizes the doctrine of the "image of God" and the concept of virtues and vices.

Professor Cavarnos finds the following Stoic elements in St. Photios: 1) the term "relation"; 2) the term "the ruling principle in man"; 3) *apatheia*. *Apatheia* in Stoic meaning



is freedom from the passions. Photios based on the Christian faith modified *apatheia* to mean freedom from negative passions, such as gluttony, conceit and malice. Photios affirms the Christian doctrines and uses secular philosophy to enhance the positive ones such as compassion and spiritual love.

All these elements of the philosophies of Plato, Aristotle and the Stoics adopted by St. Photios and the other Church fathers were modified to be in harmony with Orthodox Christian doctrines. Professor Cavarinos points out those who refer to St. Photios as Aristotelian fail to understand that the Fathers of the Church were Christians and cannot be characterized as "Aristotelian," "Platonists" or "Stoic." These characterizations cannot be applied to the Fathers because, even though they made use of elements of these philosophical systems, they remained firmly grounded in the Christian tradition contained in the Holy Scriptures and Sacred Tradition.

This book is very useful for a clearer understanding of this great Hierarchy as philosopher and theologian and champion of Orthodoxy, as well as to appreciate the Patristic thought and its classical relation to the Christian theological enterprise. The book is well written and carefully presented with great simplicity and clarity. I recommend it highly to scholars, students and the laity in general. I recommend this book especially to those who are interested in pursuing Orthodox spiritual development. This work by Dr. Constantine Cavarinos is well documented. The author speaks eloquently of St. Photios in the following manner: "The thirst for truth; the great love of wisdom, evidenced by his astonishing erudition; intellectual acumen and profoundness; objectivity; a disciplined way of thinking and expression; the "higher faith," the illuminated state that shines through his writings; and the great breadth and unity of his intellectual vision." (p. 39).

Fr. George C. Papademetriou

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## **Structure and Theology in the Gospel of John**

SAVAS AGOURIDES

Your Eminence Archbishop Demetrios,  
Members of the Board of Hellenic College and Holy  
Cross School of Theology,

Esteemed Colleagues and Dear Students:

I would like first to express my deep gratitude to the officers of this Theological School and College for their decision, within the context of this biblical conference, to confer on me the title of Honorary Doctor of the Holy Cross School of Theology. I regard this occasion as a very important event in my life.

My ties with Holy Cross go back a long way. It is no exaggeration to say that ever since my student years at the University of Athens, I have been thinking and praying for this School to become closely associated with the rejuvenation of Orthodox theology that we are all looking for so eagerly. My Athens professor Hamilcar Alivisatos first introduced this idea in Greece, and it was he who led me to believe that a new beginning for Orthodox theology would be possible only in America, in the new world. And so, together with my profound thanks for this great honor, I would also like to express the wish that this dream and hope of mine for Holy Cross School will fully come true.

I also pray for God's blessing on Archbishop Demetrios, the Board of Trustees, the faculty and students, as well as all the Orthodox faithful in America, that all together they may

fervently work toward that goal. A courageous theological movement will raise the level of the Orthodox clergy and the faithful in the Orthodox Church of this country, and perhaps positively impact on Orthodoxy throughout the world.

My topic today is entitled "Structure and Theology in the Gospel of John." It is more like an essay on the unity of the Gospel of St John. Certainly it is a broad and difficult subject, with several important points open to future research.

During the past fifty years, as you are aware, the scholarly literature in the Johannine field has become immense. It is apparent therefore that in an hour's time I cannot give you a complete picture of this interesting and much discussed subject. My remarks will be limited to general points related to the structure of the Fourth Gospel as well as to some of the most important theological observations regarding the special features of John's structure. I must confess, however, that the decisive factor in my choice of this topic was its connection to our present thirst for the renewal of Orthodox theology. The co-existence and supplementarity of John and the Synoptics has an immediate bearing on the urgent need we feel today for a renewal of our theological thinking. We are living in an age of globalization and a universal search for new meaning in our lives. As theologians, we face different dilemmas today, and we find ourselves having to make very difficult choices on many current issues. What should our attitude be, as Orthodox theologians, towards the population explosion on our planet? What are we to think about globalization and the free movement of capital and its uses all over the world? What are we supposed to do about humanity's cultural homogenization and about fostering a new universal understanding? And last but not least, how should we deal with man's ability to manipulate not only the products of nature, but also the human genome? I consider the structure and theology of John's Gospel a good guide in the effort to find our theological way. The Gospel encourages us

and sheds light on our search for a new way of thinking and a new way to deal with the problems facing us today.

Time restrictions oblige me to emphasize certain issues, and to touch only briefly on others. The Church's attitude toward the Fourth Gospel in relation to the Synoptics is instructive for us today. It did not hesitate to accept and sanction the Johannine tradition alongside the Synoptic one. Its motive for doing this was the anti-Judaistic stand of this Gospel, as well as its more effective evangelistic message for the spiritual conditions and needs of the Gentile world.

### **Structure in the Early Chapters of John**

The Fourth Gospel starts not with a birth story but with a hymn to Jesus as the divine Word (Logos) of God, who became flesh for the salvation of the world and for the creation of a new family of God in the place of the old, a family based not on the Law and Temple but on grace and truth. But Jesus' public career began, as in the Synoptic gospels, with John the Baptist, who declared to the officials of his nation, as well as to the people, that he himself was not the Messiah. Moreover, when Jesus came to him, the Baptist declared that he had had a particular vision and revelation of Jesus as the Messiah (John 1:33-34). It is clear that not only did the Baptist not believe himself to be the Messiah, but also that his recognition of Jesus as the Messiah guided two of his disciples to become followers of Jesus. One of them, Andrew, soon invited his brother Peter to the new group, assuring him: "We have found the Messiah" (John 1:41). Then Jesus, on his way to Galilee, called Philip, who brought Nathaniel into the group. Three days after the call of the first disciples Jesus went to the wedding in Cana of Galilee, where he performed his first sign as the Messiah, thus initiating his public life.

All these events mean, according to the Evangelist, that

even though Jesus was the divine Logos, it was not until he had been recognized as the Messiah by John the Baptist that he began his public life. At the wedding in Cana he performed his first sign by turning water into wine. The purpose and the result of this sign, noted by the Evangelist, was to confirm the disciples' faith in him (2:11). It seems that his brothers were also present at Cana (2:12); later, however, the Evangelist informs his readers that "even his brothers did not believe in him" (7:5). The miracle in Cana was aimed at Jesus' disciples and signified the character of their new life in comparison to the old.

To better understand this miracle, certain remarks are also necessary here about Jesus' relationship with John the Baptist as well as the relations between the Christian Church and the community of the Baptist. According to the Synoptic tradition, "after John was put in prison, Jesus came to Galilee preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God" (Mark 1:14; Matt 4:12-17; Luke 4:14). In the Fourth Gospel, in place of this, we have the parallel activity of the two men during which, according to the Gospel of John, the Baptist remained firm and consistent in his original recognition of Jesus as the Messiah, even though he continued to baptize people, while his disciples showed a rather critical attitude towards Jesus and his movement (John 3:22-26 and 5:31-36).

The following points are noteworthy. According to the Synoptics, Jesus started his preaching of the kingdom "after John was put in prison" (Mark 1:14; Matt 4:12; Luke 3:20). It was after that, at the Sea of Galilee, that Jesus, without any recommendation from the Baptist, chose the two pairs of brothers (Peter and Andrew, and John and James), all fishermen. In the Gospel of John we have the problem of the Baptist recommending that two of his disciples, Andrew and perhaps John, follow Jesus, which they did. We would have expected such a recommendation to be made not just to some of John's disciples, but to all those referred to in

the Gospel prologue who believed that John the Baptist, not Jesus, was the light of the world (1: 8). To them, according to the same Prologue, John witnesses that Jesus is the light, so that "all through him [John] might believe. He [John] was not that light, but was sent to bear witness of that light" (1:6-8). Did not such witness apply to all in the Baptist's following? In John's Gospel, after the Baptist's recognition that the Messiah had come in the person of Jesus, only two of John's disciples received his recommendation to follow Jesus, and not all of his disciples as one might have expected. To whom did the Baptist "witness" and "cry" that Jesus was "He who comes after me...but was before me" (1:15)? Apparently to his disciples. And after the recognition of the Messiah, why did not John the Baptist cease his activity and recommend that all his followers become disciples of Jesus? On the contrary, according to the Fourth Gospel (3:22-46), while the Baptist remains faithful to his original testimony about Jesus, he nevertheless goes on baptizing, and his disciples show themselves to be uninformed about Jesus and very reserved about both Him and the baptism practiced by Jesus' disciples (3:22-30).

Furthermore, in relation to the miracles Jesus performs, the witness of these great works speaks about Jesus as well as about the witness of the Scripture, and of course, the witness of God himself. All of these diminish the importance of the Baptist's witness about Jesus. He has testimonies that are greater than that of the Baptist. Jesus performs distinctively divine works with divine authority, as the witness of God the Father attests to those who believe in the Son. While the meaning of this passage is somehow obscure, the fact remains that the general tenor of this passage diminishes the importance of the Baptist's witness of Jesus. On the other hand, in chapter 10 the witness of the Baptist about Jesus retains a certain validity, but with the observation that the Baptist did not perform any miracles (10:40-42). In compar-

ison to Jesus as the “light” or “the true light,” the Baptist was only a derivative luminary. Even stranger is the Evangelist’s remark that the Jews were willing for a time to rejoice in John’s light (5:35). But Jesus had a higher witness than John, and the works given to him by the Father attest to the fact that he is the One sent by the Father. There is more than enough evidence as to who Jesus is; the reference to the Baptist’s witness is justified because of the high prestige he enjoyed among the Jewish people. From all this, it is evident that in the Gospel of John there is a serious problem between the Johannine Church and the religious community of John the Baptist.

Even in the Synoptic Gospels we have some information about Jesus’ early disciples’ problems with the disciples of John. Luke, for example, particularly in the prologue to his Gospel, sets out extensively the differences between the births of Jesus and John the Baptist, in order to stress the superiority of the former. I need hardly add more here about this, presenting additional witnesses from the Synoptic Gospels or the Acts of the Apostles. The general impression from these texts is that they were a product of competition among rival religious groups.

Regarding the territory and the duration of the ministry of Jesus, in the Synoptic tradition the territory is Galilee, and the length of service is almost a year. The content of his activity all over Galilee involved the teaching of the coming of the kingdom of God and the performing of miracles as proof that the kingdom was imminent. Jesus’ teaching was in the form of long or short speeches, preferably in parables whose content was the coming kingdom of God and people’s preparedness to enter into it. Jesus’ miraculous acts served the same end. But the response of the Galileans even in the Synoptics was not the one expected, with regard either to his teaching or his miracles. Mark believed that understanding the mystery of the kingdom of God through Jesus’ parables



was limited solely to the disciples: "to those who are outside all things come in parables, so that seeing they may see and not perceive, and hearing they may hear and not understand" (Mark 4:10-12; cf. Mark 8:18). So negative was the attitude to Jesus' teaching by various groups of the people that Jesus went to Jerusalem with very dark misgivings. There he came into conflict with the Jewish authorities, was arrested and executed. Three days later, however, he rose from the dead, and as the risen Lord he founded the Christian Church. We cannot be absolutely sure that the public career of Jesus in Galilee lasted for just a few months, that is, less than a year. It is possible that Mark gave us only a short synopsis of his Galilean ministry as the evangelist was not especially interested in the teaching ministry of Jesus. It is not impossible that he gave us merely a summary of Jesus' career.

In the Fourth Gospel, Jesus' activity extends over more than three years. Jesus visits Jerusalem for three successive Passover feasts, as well as on two other occasions of lesser importance. The audience for his long speeches of high theological content and rather contentious spirit were the Jewish leaders, the Jewish people residing in Jerusalem, and the Jewish people in general.

However, Jesus' activity in Galilee comes to an end in John chap. 6 with the Galilean Jews' rejection of him. Afterwards, up to the end of the Gospel, Jesus' actions are centered only in Judea, where he is continuously in conflict. The people were in turmoil and their polemical leaders finally succeeded in condemning Jesus to death. But his resurrection, his appearances to his disciples, and his sending of the Paraclete became the foundation of the Christian Church.

We are evidently dealing with two different traditions of Jesus' life and forms of teaching. The Synoptic tradition in its Markan form probably gives us an example of Jesus' activity and teaching in Galilee before the Jewish revolt of A.D. 70. Relatively remote from the immediate influence of

the Jerusalem authorities, the Synoptic tradition is interested mainly in the reaction of the Jews as a people to the preaching and person of Jesus. It could be said, with reservations, that the Synoptic tradition was formulated in the pre-revolutionary period in Galilee, and Jesus, as far as the Jews were concerned, was the Church's alternative to the coming cataclysm of the Jewish revolt.

Regarding the Fourth Evangelist, I would like to propose something else. My position is that he wrote *after* the fall of Jerusalem and the destruction of the governing Sadducean party, and after the consequent dominance of the Pharisaic party in the synagogues beyond the Jordan. John the Evangelist had also experienced the excommunication of Christians from the synagogue, which for them meant the loss not only of their religious but also of their national identity. It was probably for reasons of this kind that his interest turned mainly on Jesus' relations with the authorities in Jerusalem. We do not have the same problem in Galilee. John's main problem was not one of power and authority but rather the Galileans' general misunderstanding of the meaning of Jesus' signs. This misunderstanding, according to the conclusion of chap. 6, led to the so-called "Galilean crisis" and to the end of Jesus' activity in Galilee.

We must not forget that our Gospels are not historical biographies, but gospels of salvation, implying responses to the real needs of the early Christians, and that they are derived from communal traditions about Jesus with a very broad perspective and in response to various and concrete needs of the early Christian communities.

### **The Meaning of Jesus' Signs**

It has already been made clear that, after John the Baptist, the main problem in the first part of the Fourth Gospel is the meaning of Jesus' signs. After the miracle of turning water

into wine in Cana, the theme of the signs continues with the following pericope of Jesus driving the merchants and moneychangers out of the Temple in Jerusalem. The Jews asked him for a sign justifying the authority for intervening in the operation of the Temple. But he symbolically answered with a reference to his death and resurrection, events and answers that will come only in the future. However, during his stay in Jerusalem Jesus performed many signs (2:23). The Pharisee Nicodemus, a member of the Jewish high council, came secretly to Jesus by night and said to him: "No one can do these signs that you do unless God is with him" (3:2). The Evangelist tells us that Jesus performed many signs in Jerusalem, but he does not mention any, after declaring that Jesus did not trust those who believed in him because of the signs (2:23-25). Their faith was not genuine. The reasons are explained in the discussion with Nicodemus and in what follows. Although the evangelist knew about many more of Jesus' signs than those reported in the Gospel, he selects those few that are most suitable to the theological perspective of the Gospel. It is noteworthy, however, that in Samaria, where his preaching was fully successful, Jesus did not perform any miracles, perhaps suggesting that true faith does not need miracles. More or less the same idea is expressed by Jesus' second miracle in Galilee, the healing of the official's son. "Unless you people see signs and wonders, you will by no means believe" (4:48), said Jesus, underscoring human weakness in matters of faith. The official, however, believed wholeheartedly in Jesus' words that his son would live and the fact was attested by his servants on his way home. His entire household, family members and servants alike, believed in Jesus. Thus, after the dialogue with Nicodemus, the purpose of Jesus' signs was further addressed in the pericope of the healing of the official's son, with emphasis on the faith of the official who is primarily concerned with the miracle. Beyond that, people misunder-

stand the meaning of Jesus' miracles.

That miracles in themselves do not always bring people to genuine faith is shown by the evangelist through the two miracles that follow. In chapter 5, when Jesus heals the Paralytic at the Bethesda pool in Jerusalem, the Jews react by saying that the paralytic carrying his bed on Jesus' command was forbidden to do so by God's law regarding the observance of the Sabbath. The entire pericope is a form of ironic criticism of the Jewish interpretation of religious practical guidance. In chapter 6, instead of generating true faith, the feeding of the multitudes in the wilderness results in what is usually called the "Galilean crisis," namely, a virtual failure in Galilee of Jesus' ministry through miracles.

The evangelist has a similar purpose when he describes the spectacular miracles of the cure of the man born blind (ch. 9) and the raising of Lazarus (ch. 11). The Pharisees who question the case of the man born blind, as the miracle was performed on the Sabbath, actually prove themselves to be blind, while any supporter of the authenticity of the miracle ran the danger of being put out of the synagogue. On the other hand, the raising of Lazarus caused great religious enthusiasm among the people, even the people of Jerusalem, who organized an extremely warm welcome for Jesus. But this very enthusiasm assisted the plans of the Jewish leadership to bring about Jesus' death and end his career, in that the popular response to the raising of Lazarus contributed to Jesus' arrest and execution.

It is evident that Jesus' signs in the Fourth Gospel have a particular function that we do not find elsewhere in the New Testament. They are not just expressions of God's love and compassion for man in the face of suffering, needs, disease and death. They are not a down payment on the great salvation anticipated with the coming of the kingdom of God, or something of a prefigurement of the coming kingdom itself. Rather, as in the long discourse in the Fourth Gospel follow-

ing the miracle of the loaves and fishes in the wilderness (ch. 6), Jesus tries to make his audience understand that his signs are given in order to help them perceive the meaning of the great sign which is Jesus himself. Unfortunately, the Jews could not make this transition from the signs to the person of Jesus, from the loaves and fishes to the eternal life which Jesus gives, and which is related to the eternal God. On the contrary, after the miracle in the wilderness, they remind him that every day for a long time God sent food from heaven to the Fathers of the Jewish nation who were in the desert. As a consequence, they asked Jesus to provide a permanent solution for the feeding of his people. Here Jesus draws their attention to man's spiritual substance, to the relation between human life and eternity, and to the fact that he is the bread of life that came down from heaven. Only those who eat of this heavenly bread will have eternal life.

### **Signs and Discourses**

From the literary point of view, I would like to say just a few words here about the tradition of signs in the compositional history of the Fourth Gospel, and how the signs are related to the discourses explaining them. I refer here to the book by R.T. Fortna, *The Fourth Gospel and its Predecessor: From Narrative Source to Present Gospel* (Fortress Press, Philadelphia, 1988). According to Fortna, the "Signs Source" was once followed by the Passion narrative. It seems that these two Christological sources became soteriological when, as a larger literary composition, they were related to the "Revelatory Discourses," which came from the Fourth Evangelist himself. According to Raymond Brown, the older material took the form of a Gospel in a series of teaching editions made by the evangelist himself. This adaptation of an original text to meet new demands and purposes started with the evangelist. At this point, mention

should be made of the dissenting view of Rudolf Bultmann, who believed that a different author, someone influenced by Gnosticism, wrote the "Revelatory Discourses." This is how Bultmann introduced one of the most serious, but also the most difficult, problems in Johannine studies. Our judgment today regarding several points of the Fourth Gospel depends on the kind of Gnostic material each New Testament writer compares. Gnostic elements may be found in the Fourth Gospel; the difficulty is that we do not have a very clear picture of Gnostic currents in the first century. Research has a great deal of work to do in this field, particularly after the recent discovery of the Nag Hammadi Gnostic texts, and our certainty of their influence on Judaism since the first century onward. Raymond Brown, for example, proposes the Wisdom theology of the Old Testament as sufficient explanation of the "Gnostic" elements in John, but this proposal does not cover all the questions raised by the text of the Fourth Gospel.

From another perspective, we have to take seriously what Oscar Callman writes in his study *The Johannine Circle* (SCM Press, 1975), as well as what many other scholars write about the Johannine Letters. This means that we cannot deny in principle that a distinguished member of Johannine school, the writer of chapter 21 of the Gospel and final editor of the book as a whole, may be responsible for the last redaction of the Gospel as it has come down to us.

Biblical scholarship, with its various proposals, has taken great steps forward since C. H. Dodd's first memorable work, *The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel* (Cambridge, 1953). It was he who first tried to relate the signs theologically to the discourses accompanying them. Needless to say, this sign-discourse pattern does not constitute a general rule for John. We have important Christological teaching materials based not on a specific sign but on the main idea or the symbols of some main features of popular Jewish feasts,

such as the Feast of the Tabernacles (chs. 7-8) or the Feast of the Purification of the Temple (ch. 10).

In this context, a few words must be added in connection with Jesus' speeches in Jerusalem. In chapter 7, Jesus is in Jerusalem or somewhere close to the city. Verse 7:1 announces his intent as follows: "After these things Jesus walked in Galilee; for he did not want to walk in Judea, because the Jews sought to kill him." Nevertheless, his future activity from then on took place in Jerusalem and Judea. And some Jews, chiefly pilgrims to Jerusalem, become interested in his teaching and even believed in him because of the signs. But Jesus did not trust them, and they finally succumbed to the arguments against Jesus put forward by the Jerusalemite Jews, namely, that he is possessed by the devil, while they are children of Abraham and heirs of the promises given to him. There was therefore no reason to rely on Jesus' words.

On such occasions Jesus took his starting point from some characteristic features of certain Jewish feasts, and presented himself as the fulfillment of the main messages proclaimed by these feasts. Regarding the water of the Siloam fountain and the illumination of the Temple, he presents himself throughout the feast of Tabernacles as the water of life, and invites those who thirst to come to him to satisfy their thirst. Or he stresses that he is the light of the world; those who follow him do not walk in darkness since the true light leads them to authentic life. In this connection, the healing of the man born blind shows by comparison the blindness of the Pharisees in a spectacular way. This teaching expressed the reversal of the teaching of the Jewish leaders.

However, in relation to the winter feast of Dedication celebrating the purification of the Jewish Temple from its defilement by Antiochus Epiphanes who had turned it into a heathen temple, Jesus presents himself in contrast to the Maccabees of old. He is the Good Shepherd who knows who his sheep are, and knows the right way to feed and protect

them. His motive for doing all this is different from the motives of the Maccabees, the theocratic and tyrannical rulers who abused the sheep while pretending to protect them.

The first part of the Gospel closes with several significant events: the raising of Lazarus as a foreshadowing of Jesus' resurrection and as a sign of the final resurrection of the dead; the anointing of Jesus by Mary, the sister of Lazarus as a foreshadowing of his death; his peculiar triumphal entry into Jerusalem; and the fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecy about the rejection of Jesus by his people because of their blindness and lack of faith.

I would like to interrupt the sequence here to make a remark. It seems that the raising of Lazarus and even the resurrection of Jesus himself have not been fully appreciated by modern research. Both are very important events, and we cannot equate their significance to similar miracles, such as the cure of the paralytic in chapter 5. Lazarus died and was brought back to life as a preface to the death and resurrection of Jesus. Beyond that, the person of John, the writer of the Gospel, according to chapter 21, was connected by the early Christians to the second coming of Jesus. This means that, in spite of a deep awareness of the delay of the parousia, we cannot assign to the evangelist ignorance of all Jewish eschatological teachings and credit instead only the person we usually call "the Redactor of the Fourth Gospel" for such ideas.

### **History and Theology in John**

Before we enter into matters of the structure and theology of the second part of the Gospel, certain remarks of a more general nature should be made on the relation of history to theology in John's thinking. From what has already been said, it is clear that his elaboration of the historically specific situation of the Christian community demands something



new structurally and theologically in the Gospel. In this regard, Oscar Cullmann observes that in the Fourth Gospel the resurrected Jesus speaks just as he did before his crucifixion, although the presence of the Johannine circle within primitive Christianity is usually emphasized in relation to the historical value of the Fourth Gospel. Moreover, to certain scholars, the circle was in fact represented by John. In any event, "his own" were those who knew him and followed him. "With what security did they act as they did? This security – whatever it may have been – is found beyond the world" (*The Johannine Church*, p. 3).

E. Käsemann, on the other hand, asks the more general question of what is the significance of the incarnation for the meaning of history in general. And with a tone of German exaggeration, he supports the view that only revelation produces history – all the rest is sound and smoke. The past is preserved to the extent that it points ahead to him; the future is nothing other than a glorified extension and repetition of his presence. "All history has a theme, and this is the *presentia Christi*" (*The Testament of Jesus*, London, 1968, p. 36).

According to the Apostle Paul, Jesus in the flesh, the historical Jesus, is of no decisive theological interest (2 Cor 5:16). It is the crucifixion as an event that has the deepest meaning, because on the cross of Jesus the whole of humanity was vindicated, not by the works of the Law but by faith in Jesus Christ – faith in God's grace and love for humanity. For Paul, this is the gospel of Jesus Christ, but Paul has little interest in history, and merely uses it as reference, not substance. John, on the other hand, seems to view history more as a "container" or a "means". Therefore, Paul and John, both great theologians of early Christianity, address the same question: was the possibility of finding the divine Savior through the historical Jesus entirely precluded to Judaism, and was what finally prevailed in Judaism a matter of valid rejection? Paul believes that Judaism did not find a

Messiah in the person of Jesus because he is uninterested in the historical aspect, although he emphasizes the theological significance of the fact that, as a historical reality, Jesus was condemned in the context of the religious tradition of the Jews.

The strange thing is that neither Paul's undisputed relations with Palestinian Christianity, nor the element of historical narrative in John, permit the formulation of an extreme view on this matter, namely, the lack of any historical search for Jesus and his omission from history. In other words, the question is, does the Fourth Evangelist use history as history or, as some scholars propose, does he use history as a servant of belief, ultimately turning history into a servant of his theology about Christ and our salvation? Even Paul believes that there are "those who are perishing, whose minds the god of this age has blinded, who do not believe, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine on them" (2 Cor 4:3-4). He explains, therefore, the less than universal faith in Jesus and his ministry among humanity. It is the devil, the "god of this age," who blinds people, so they cannot see. In the Gospel of John, however, this blindness has a more universal character, namely, that people were not willing to believe!

In the Synoptic Gospels, the language of Jesus differs from the narrative language used by the evangelistic authors, whereas in the Gospel of John the language of the narrative and the language of Jesus' teachings are the same.

When we read the dramatic chapters of John 5-12, we ask ourselves what the main theme is. The world's disbelief is presented in the sense of a catalytic attack by the power of darkness against the light of God in the person of Jesus. The emphasis is not so much on the salvation offered by Jesus, as is the case with his words and deeds in the Synoptics, although this element is present in John; what is emphasized in John is the rejection of the Divine Emissary who accom-

plishes his mission as Savior only by his crucifixion, by sacrificing his life on the cross.

This marked rejection of Jesus has also been studied from the viewpoint of historical factors that might have exercised strong influence on the evangelist's theological choices. One such instance is the expulsion of the Christians from the synagogue in A.D. 83 by the rabbinic leadership, depriving them not only of their ancestral religion but also of their nationality. In this regard, I draw your attention for further reading to the interesting material introduced by Prof. J. L. Martyn of Union Theological Seminary (*History and Theology in the Fourth Gospel*, New York, 1968, 1972; and *The Gospel of John in Christian History*, New York, 1978).

C. K. Barrett, in his study *The Gospel of John and Judaism*, (London S.P.C.K., 1975), approaches the problem by emphasizing the political developments in the Empire that, especially after the Flavians, deeply influenced both Judaism and Christianity. This influence was expressed within the Church both institutionally and in a certain prophetic openness towards Gnosticism. Barrett notes a decline of apocalyptic expectation, as well as the acceptance of certain Gnostic modes of thinking (p. 66). As parallels to the Fourth Gospel influenced by this trend, Barrett presents Ignatius of Antioch ("Institutionalism and Theology of the Gnostic Type") and the Pastoral Epistles (esp. 1 Tim. 3:16). On the part of Judaism, we find the prevalence of Rabbinism on the one hand, and Merkabat mysticism on the other. Barrett, an Anglican, speaks of the "use of Gnostic *language*, not of Gnostic notions themselves" (p. 73). He refers to two events in Judaism and Christianity that are associated with these changes after A.D. 70: Jesus himself and the Fourth Gospel differentiate Jesus from the Law (John 10:34; 15:25; 19:7), as if he was outside of Judaism. As a result, the contrast between the two ways had only one outcome: Jews and Christians could only be in conflict. The "Jews"

are a group antagonistic to Jesus (5:16; 10:31; 15:25; 19:7). John's Gospel is based as much on the Old Testament as on Gnostic ways of expressing his thinking. As for the Judaism of the writer, Barrett says that the Fourth Gospel contains elements of Judaism, non-Judaism and anti-Judaism!

In this brief discussion about the relationship between history and theology we must not forget that the Paraclete is very much involved, although this is neither the time nor the place to explore this theme. Let me just say that I accept the statement of John Painter in his text *The Quest for the Messiah* (Edinburgh, 2nd edition, 1993, p. 432): The Paraclete was not introduced by the Evangelist to deal with the problems he encountered during the writing of the Gospel. He believed rather that he had the support of the Paraclete, the Spirit of Truth, and tried to explain this experience in the best way he could. In the final redaction, the role of the Paraclete of Truth was shown in such a way that the revealed Truth was presented as no longer limited to the Jesus tradition. New truths were expected to be revealed, through the action of the Spirit. But this created the problem of recognizing clearly the distinction between true and false inspiration. Time does not permit further comment on this subject; but the role that could be played by this understanding of the Paraclete is critical in the manifestation of new truths regarding the themes of history and theology as outlined above.

I have interjected these observations on the history and theology of John the Evangelist in order to further illuminate the understanding of what preceded and what now follows.

### **The Farewell Discourse**

In the second part of the Gospel of John (chs. 13-17), before the story of the passion and resurrection of Jesus, we have no additional signs or new discussions between Jesus and his Jewish opponents, but rather a lengthy discourse on

Jesus' relations with his disciples in the time immediately after his death and resurrection, as well as into the future. This section certainly attests to John's structural and theological particularity as a Christian Evangelist, but what must also be stressed in particular is the general support given to the unity of the Fourth Gospel by his teaching about the Paraclete. In the first part of the Gospel, Jesus is presented as Lord through his signs and his revelatory discourses, while in the second part, his sending of the Paraclete to the Church signals a change in his own new presence among them. The theme of these chapters, taught by Jesus on the eve of his departure from this world, concerns the foundation of the Church, as well as the assurance given to the disciples that, after Jesus' death and return to his Father, his presence among them would be replaced by the Paraclete, the Spirit of Truth. The Spirit was henceforth to support the Church in its struggles in the world, and guide it by enriching its spiritual experience.

This section of the Gospel presents a new structure and a new theology in the Church's Gospel tradition, but it also indicates very obvious problems in terms of the composition and continuity of the text. An unusual event caused the displacement of certain segments in these chapters. The problem of these chapters is well known, and a number of different answers have been proposed to reconcile these problems: a) theories about the displacement of parts of the text by chance; b) theories about the evangelist's multiple sources; and c) theories about multiple editions of the Gospel, and, in this particular case, of the successive revisions of this ecclesiastically extremely important text.

I endorse the view of the revisions, and agree with Raymond Brown that the evangelist does not hesitate to adjust the text to serve new aims, or to introduce new material that will meet needs arising from new problems. For example, how is the coming of the Spirit-Paraclete related to the

delay of the parousia? How does this delay connect with the faithful in their graves awaiting the parousia, and their unification with Jesus in the bosom of the Father? Why do these chapters emphasize the need to love our brethren and not our enemies? The Paraclete meant the revelation of new truth on various issues, according to these chapters. This new truth was always in agreement with Christ's truth, but was nevertheless new. New problems of this type and new theological perspectives presuppose new efforts to continue to revitalize the Jesus tradition.

The first event in the second part of the Gospel is the last meal Jesus shared with his disciples. It is evident that John knew about a very important last meal that Jesus ate with his disciples; but it was not a Passover meal because, in John's tradition, Jesus was crucified before the evening the Jews ate their Passover meal. This does not mean that he did not know the Eucharist. From what he said about "living water" to the Samaritan woman, as well as about "the bread of life" in chapter 6, we know he did. But in chapter 13 we have a common meal with two special characteristics: one was Jesus' washing of the disciples' feet; the other was that Judas' decision on this occasion to begin making plans to betray his master.

We will leave this superb pericope aside with only one comment. Although no Eucharist is recounted here, the evangelist, in relating Jesus' washing of the disciples' feet, has probably given us the best comment on the relations that must have existed among the disciples, similar to their relations assumed by the narration of the Eucharist in the Synoptics, with particular emphasis in both accounts on the nature of the leadership in the Church, whether by Peter or others. Does the association of the betrayal with the common meal mean that this event is rather a typical incident in the Church's history?

There is a problem regarding the relationship of the sev-

eral sections of the Farewell Discourse among themselves, and scholars are divided in resolving this dilemma. I would like to express the opinions of C. K. Barrett and John Painter. Barrett leaves aside the solution very often proposed about the dislocation of sections by recognizing that the evangelist produced more than one version of the discourse. On the basis of possible evidence of dislocation in 14:31 alone, Barrett proposes that not one but two versions of the discourse were included in the Gospel, whereas Painter, rightly I believe, detects three versions. Painter determines this number on the basis of the crisis situations reflected in the homily. One version is based on the theme of Jesus' absence after his departure and ascent to the Father, in which case the Spirit was to remind and help the disciples come to the right interpretation of the teaching and will of Jesus, and to face the delay of the parousia. The second version (15:1 - 16:4a) reflects the Church's battle with the synagogue, presented as a hostile world. Moreover, because of the persecution faced by the disciples, the role of the Paraclete is to convince, to strengthen, and to teach. In the third version, the challenges met by the disciples demanded a new inspiration and teaching by the Spirit with the revelation of new truths inspired by the Spirit to meet new needs.

Chapter 17 deals with the community's relations to the world. The situation presented here seems to be slightly later than the third version of the Farewell Discourse and slightly earlier than the one we have in John's First Epistle.

### **The Passion Narrative**

Regarding the Passion Narrative in the Fourth Gospel, I would like to draw your attention to certain obvious variations of John's Gospel as regards Jesus' arrest and judgment by the Jewish leaders and Pilate, his crucifixion and death, and his appearances as the risen Lord. This part of John's sto-

ry is the closest to its Synoptic counterparts. The Johannine variations, however, express the most characteristic particularities of the Johannine version of this parallel narrative.

John, for example, does not relate Jesus' agony over his imminent death. Jesus is not arrested by the Jewish-Roman military group sent for this purpose. Jesus was not even arrested; he delivered himself to them, at the same time performing a miracle to demonstrate his power and their weakness. He was arrested of his own will and initiative. The kiss of Judas was not necessary nor was Peter's effort to defend his master.

Jesus' interrogation before Annas and Caiphas was not like an investigation in a regular court; it was a travesty of justice as presented by the Evangelist, for the simple reason that the decision had already been made before Jesus was arrested and therefore was not the result of a regular trial. The reader is, however, surprised to find in this context a rather extensive narrative of Peter's denial of his master under the compassionate eyes of the beloved disciple. We have somewhat parallel scenes, as the two great apostles visit the tomb of Jesus (ch. 20), and in the appendix of the gospel (ch. 21). Certainly, the main reason for the reference to Peter in the context of Jesus' trial both in the Synoptics and in John is mainly to accentuate Jesus' solitude in his trial and passion.

Pilate's investigation of Jesus centers on the question of whether Jesus considered himself a king and what kind of king. Pilate discusses this with the Jewish leaders, with Jesus, and with the Jewish people. But nothing emerges that makes any sense for him. And, as Pilate cannot decide the matter for himself, he finally lets the mob decide, thus securing their favor. So Jesus was condemned to death, and Barabbas, a notorious revolutionary, was set free, according to the Roman custom of releasing a prisoner on Passover, to encourage greater celebrate among the people.

Jesus died on the cross as king, and from his cross, he



entrusted the care of his mother to the beloved disciple. He was saved from having his legs broken and he said "I thirst" (19:28) and "It is finished" (19:30). Everything that occurred with Jesus on the cross was intended to fulfill what the scriptures had foretold about his passion. Everything happened according to an existing plan. Jesus also had a proper burial given to him by Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus, who were leaders of the Jews (19:38-40).

Regarding his appearances after the resurrection, there is a varying tradition. The first day of the week starts with Mary Magdalene's warning to Peter and John about the tomb being empty. They ran to the tomb. John was the first to believe in the resurrection, the second was Mary Magdalene to whom the Lord appeared separately. Then on the same day, behind closed doors, the risen Jesus revealed himself to ten of his disciples, and eight days later, to all his disciples, including Thomas, who had been absent previously. The Gospel ends at 20:30-32, although these verses may have come from the ending of the Book of Signs. Although its general meaning is clear, the identification of the 'many signs' with more appearances of the risen Lord leaves us with a problem, however, which explains the later addition of chapter 21.

Chapter 21 relates the appearance of the risen Lord to seven of his disciples at the Sea of Galilee. Several scholars believe that this appearance also comes from the Book of Signs, and the addition most likely comes from the hand of the redactor of the Gospel. The narrative seeks to show that the risen Lord made more appearances to his disciples in order to encourage them in the difficult task of preaching the gospel. Although here Peter is the acknowledged leader of the Church, the unnamed disciple plays an equal, if not superior role in the story. In addition, it was believed that the unnamed disciple whom Jesus loved would not die before Jesus' second coming. But he did die, and the writer of this appendix explained that one of Jesus' sayings about him

was mistaken as meaning that he would remain alive until the parousia. Beyond that information, this text is an effort to put Peter and John on equal footing as authorities of the Church, and John in a very clear relation to the parousia and its delay.

### **Additional Comments**

I turn now to brief comments on certain issues that were not touched upon in the exposition of our main topic.

First, a few words about the composition and unity of the Gospel, as several references have been made to sources, different editions, final redaction, and so on. The Gospel has been presented here as the product of a theological workshop. All these stages in the shaping of the Gospel text aim to give it a fuller expression in terms of the Church's developing demands. The final redaction was an attempt to synthesize all previous efforts, and in its final form the Gospel could more effectively be used against Gnosticism by virtue of its special emphasis on the here and now, and also in dealing with the unexpectedly long delay of the parousia. New solutions were found to interrelated problems, such as Jesus' having come from heaven and returning there after his death and resurrection. These new proposals set forth in the Gospel were accepted by the Church not as contrary but as supplementary to the eschatological teaching of the Synoptic tradition. The adoption of the Johannine emphasis on the present, the here and now, supplemented for the Church the Synoptic emphasis on the eschaton. Certainly, there is a vagueness in this Johannine proposal; however, it greatly served the Church's theological needs, particularly in certain Hellenistic religious communities that were helped to overcome the perception of apocalyptic failure, and generate badly needed support in their fight against Gnosticism. The editor of the Gospel, who appended chapter 21, knew the

difference between the Petrine and the Johannine traditions, and in chapter 21 confirmed both of them. By its recognition of Jesus' messianic character, the Fourth Gospel provides sufficient ground for the elaboration of this factor and its combination with the Synoptic tradition. The Johannine tradition is characterized by its vitality and its capacity to adjust to new demands. The Johannine Epistles are an example of this approach as well.

Regarding the question of Gnosticism, as already attested by Paul's Epistles, the Church had launched a vigorous struggle against Gnostic ideas that exalted the particularity of the subjective conscience in our relation to heavenly things under the schema of descent and ascent. John presented the Christian gospel as "true knowledge," namely as a subjective discovery of our true self with the assistance of the Revealer Jesus and the Paraclete. In this way both the spiritual present as well as the world beyond the grave satisfy human needs. This type of mild Gnosis, together with eschatological and apocalyptic material, gave the Church defensive as well as offensive weapons against Gnosticism. At the end of the first century, the Church was experiencing some very intense problems, including the delay of the parousia, Gnosticism's emphasis on salvation here and now, and the need to find a more effective missionary approach to the Hellenistic world. The Gospel of John responded in general to these needs of the Church, but not in the sense that it was written to meet these needs. Certainly it would have been impossible for the Church to adopt the Fourth Gospel if this text had had a Christology apparently similar to the supposedly Mandaic christological view about John the Baptist held by his disciples, according to Rudolf Bultmann. The Pastoral Epistles prove the Church's sensitivity to Gnostic ideas of this type, although sometimes related to Jewish traditional teaching as we have them today in a number of cases in the Nag Hammadi Gnostic texts. Moreover, such Mandaic

texts concerning the disciples of the Baptist have not yet been found for very evident reasons: the Church could not adopt fundamental doctrines regarding Christ from an inimical front without exposing itself to its enemies. We should be grateful for Bultmann's contribution, not for his proposal of cosmological dualism, but for his existential dualism and its application to the understanding of several points in the Gospel of John.

Summarizing what has been said about the influence of Gnosticism, I would say that John shows the influence of a very general Gnostic atmosphere, reminiscent of Bishop Ignatius of Antioch (108 AD), as well as the Psalms of Solomon (early second century), both of which are ideological partners in John's religious language. Where (Palestine or Syria?) and how John came into contact with Gnosticism we do not know. This is why I did not touch at all on the manner of John's interpretation of the Old Testament. We can only say here that he was not the first to interpret the Old Testament so freely. In this he had been preceded not only by Philo and the apocalyptic writers but also by Merkabat Judaism, a rabbinic mystical understanding of many things in the Hebrew Bible.

### **Conclusion**

I will close this paper with general remarks about some important issues. Although the Church was born in a close relationship with Judaism, the time came when it had to be separated from Judaism. The Fourth Gospel served this purpose very effectively.

In understanding the structure and theology of the Fourth Gospel, it helps to keep in mind the existence of the Johannine School as an historical fact. According to several preeminent scholars, we assign John's three Epistles to different authorities today, and we discuss different editions of the Gospel,

either by the evangelist himself or, after his death, by the Johannine circle, a group quite faithful to and respectful of their founder.

I have not mentioned St. John of the Apocalypse, nor Asia Minor in relation to the writer of the Fourth Gospel. If I had to identify John the writer of the Gospel, it would be John the Jerusalemite and “beloved disciple” of Jesus. Regarding where the Gospel was written, my preference would be Syria at the end of the first century. It is not difficult to explain how the Gospel and its author were by tradition linked with Asia Minor, where we encounter more than one “John”. In early Church speculation about when and where this Gospel was written, there was more than one tradition. We do not know how late in the first century John died; according to John 21, this happened rather late. The tradition was that he would not die before the parousia, the Second Coming of Jesus, which means that he particularly expected the parousia.

John and his school felt free to publish a Gospel that, while not different in essence structurally or theologically, was nonetheless at variance with the Synoptic tradition. And the Church received both traditions with equal gratitude as they both, with some variations, expressed the Church’s faith in Jesus Christ for the salvation of the world. We must not bypass this tremendously important event in our theologizing today, when we are trying different ways of bringing the gospel of Jesus closer to modern humanity and are hoping for a theological revival of Orthodoxy today.

Here I would like to conclude my paper by expressing once again my gratitude to the Holy Cross Greek Orthodox School of Theology in Boston for awarding me an honorary doctorate, and by promising to keep working for the faith as long as I live. From the bottom of my heart, I would like to express my very best wishes to you in your efforts to disseminate Orthodox theology among the American people. Thank you for your kindness.

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## **The Educational Task of Orthodoxy in America**

ANTON C. VRAME

Depending on how you look at things or whom you ask, either something has been seriously wrong with the educational efforts of Orthodox Christianity in America over the last fifty years or seriously right.<sup>1</sup> From one perspective, even after many years of Sunday school, the typical Orthodox Christian “does not know” his or her faith. They can’t name the sacraments, tell the difference between the Old Testament and the New Testament, or explain Chalcedonian Christology. From another perspective, it would seem that our efforts at religious education have been successful. On a typical Sunday, parishes have long lines for Holy Communion, parents expect more and better programs for their children, adults are studying the Bible and issues pertaining to the faith and ethics.

Both sides are correct. My observations on this are purely anecdotal and experiential. These are observations made from traveling around the country in the last few years and experiencing parishes with great educational programs and struggling ones. They are observations drawn from listening to people talk about their parish experiences and the challenges they have in maintaining parish life.

The unevenness in our educational ministry appears to be caused by multiple factors. Let me point to a few sociological

and historical issues. First, despite being cautioned against the schooling model of educating people in faith from someone as knowledgeable as the late John Boojamra<sup>2</sup>, in parishes where there are strong schooling models being utilized, we see “successful” programs of instruction. In communities where enrolling a student in Sunday school is practically obligatory because of the commitments of strong leadership or where there is a culture of religious education – here I especially but not exclusively mean in the South, Bible Belt or communities with a large number of people embracing Orthodoxy (converts), or a parish with a growing fundamentalist group – we see impressive programs and students who actually seem to be learning.

Second, in the parishioners and clergy that were profoundly affected by the “Spiritual Renewal Movement” of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese in the 1970s or the liturgical and eucharistic renewal preached by such leaders as the late Fr. Alexander Schmemmann – and these two movements are connected – we see the lines for Holy Communion, the dynamic youth programs, and vibrant activity for other groups.

Third, in the parishioners and clergy who have been actively involved in mission and evangelization and humanitarian programs from International Orthodox Christian Charities to the Orthodox Christian Mission Center, we see transformational parish life.

In short, in those places where the faith and the implications of faith upon a person’s lifestyle are taken seriously we see a strong educational ministry. This doesn’t mean that there aren’t problems – even when parish leaders, clergy and lay take the faith seriously. Let me name a few.

*Distances.* While we say we are glad we are no longer living in ethnic or religious ghettos, there was a positive side to them. People could be involved in the life of the parish fairly easily. Indeed, families centered much of their life on parish life. A ride to church may not have been more than



fifteen or twenty minutes, which made not only participation in the Sunday program possible, but also participation in programs throughout the week. All of this contact with the church had an impact.

Now that we have moved out of the ghettos, even of New York and Chicago, and people are traveling thirty or more minutes to go to church, our ties as a community are strained. Going to church regularly on Sunday can become a chore for a family. The impact of the "suburbanization" of parish life and the role of the automobile on it is a factor with which we must contend. And we must also contend with the fact that on that typical thirty-minute drive, one might pass other Orthodox parishes, of various jurisdictions or one's own, and pass them by to attend the parish of choice.<sup>3</sup>

*Options.* Thirty years ago, Orthodox people participated in parish-sponsored events, from the afternoon language school, evening youth group meeting, basketball or other athletic program, in addition to public school-based programs. Today parishes are competing with the park district basketball and soccer program, school-sponsored programs, play groups and play dates, day care and after-school programs, gymnastics and ballet. The range of options for families has enlarged and churches are competing for the commitment of their parishioners.

*Family life.* A generation ago, women were really just beginning to enter the workforce in a way that would dramatically affect family life. Now women are relatively equal to men, in numbers of options, in wage-earning and in career ladders. Of course there is room for improvement still. However, the die for the impact on family life has already been cast. From one parent being home for the children, now parents must schedule who will pick up the children and drop them off at another activity until the other parent can retrieve them later. With these demands on a family, parents are looking for the kinds of options mentioned above. Parishes

could offer some of them, especially in the form of after-school programs, but so far have not.

The phenomenon of two working parents has also affected our economics – two-income families has made more options available, from more weekends away, to participation in other enriching activities, to the insulation from many of life's unpleasant realities that relative prosperity can offer. Fewer and fewer people remember a time of hardship in their family's lives.

Inter-Christian marriage has also affected family life. One week the family "goes" Orthodox; next week it "goes" Methodist. This keeps both sides happy, but sends a very confusing religious message to children. Without Orthodox clergy knowing it, Orthodox family members may even receive Holy Communion in non-Orthodox parishes that have open communion. Some families are very grateful that Orthodox Easter – Greek Easter as the grocery stores call it – is celebrated one week later, because inter-Christian couples can celebrate Easter dinner on both sides of the family and not cause any arguments or family dramas for anyone. There are theological issues that inter-Christian marriage raises, but the real issues are pastoral. Fr. Charles Joanides of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese has done quite a bit to outline those issues in his recently published study, *When You Inter marry*.<sup>4</sup> However, some of the most dramatic examples of pastoral issues have less to do with religious matters, and a great deal more to do with the realities when two ethnicities intermarry. The film "My Big Fat Greek Wedding" presented those differences and challenges in a humorous way. However, if you talk to clergy, you will find that not all "mixed marriages" are so humorous.

*Pluralism.* Thirty years ago, I grew up in predominantly white Roman Catholic neighborhood and suburb of Chicago. Now when I go home, the neighbors are as likely to be Muslim and Hindu as they are Roman Catholic. Dealing

with the effects of this pluralism, from recognizing that not all of my neighbors celebrate Christmas to my celebrating Christmas in a non-offensive manner is a new challenge, for all people of faith in the United States. My parents' Muslim neighbors in Oak Lawn, Illinois are struggling with this too. How will the other children relate to the adolescent girl who chooses to wear the *hijab*? Also, we have been exposed to a variety of spiritualities as a result of pluralism. Thirty years ago, the Dalai Lama was not the publishing sensation that he is today, nor influencing Christian lives as he has. Thirty years ago, an Orthodox Christian might study Buddhism in college, but probably never met a Buddhist, and certainly never participated in a Buddhist meditation program.

The need for tolerance and respect that ethnic and religious pluralism generates in the United States means that, at least for Christians, we seem to have lost our privileged position in the society. As some of the members of the Orthodox Christian Fellowship at the University of California at Berkeley pointed out about Christmas, we just can't assume that the person we are talking to is a Christian and so saying "Merry Christmas" has given way to "Happy Holidays." In many public schools, Christian Christmas carols have given way to commercial songs – "Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer" and "Jingle Bells" – at the same time we teach songs for Hanukkah and the practices of Kwanzaa. This has created a twofold challenge. On the one hand, despite the separation of church and state, which keeps religion out of public schools, religion is present in the schools and at Christmas time this is horribly messed up and confusing. On the other hand, in order to continue our peaceful experiment in tolerance for religious diversity, religious education is precisely what is needed in our schools.

Orthodox Christians tend to use religious education, Christian education, and catechesis interchangeably. However, there is a history to each term closely tied to trends in theology

and education of the twentieth century. With these terms, Orthodox really mean catechesis and mystagogy. Catechesis is the process of education leading one in the conversion process to Christian baptism, whereas mystagogy is what takes place after baptism, yet we lump the two together. Catechesis is intentionally confessional, liturgically-based and oriented around “making” someone a believer.<sup>5</sup> Catechesis is what we want in our parishes. Catechesis is not what we want in our public schools.

By “religious education” I mean the educational ideas first put forth by George Albert Coe of Union Seminary in the early twentieth century. He wrote that the aim of religious education “should be the facilitation of ‘growth of the young toward and into mature and efficient devotion to the democracy of God and happy self-realization therein.’”<sup>6</sup> In the religious education movement of this time, the theological content embraced religious pluralism wholeheartedly, progress and democracy were highly valued, and there was deep reservation about “converting” people as a result of education. Religions could be studied – any and all – without the expectation that someone would become an adherent to any religion because of what was studied. Religious education would increase understanding among people, facilitate the growth of American democracy, and enrich the lives of those who studied these areas of life.

Church programs have paid the price for the level of mobility, the level of wealth, the range of options, and the changes in the family that have taken place in the last decades. As Boston University sociologist Peter Berger pointed out a few years ago at the Holy Cross conference on the parish, the “taken-for-grantedness” of being born into and being nurtured by an Orthodox Christian parish and family no longer exists.<sup>7</sup> What made being Orthodox “taken for granted” thirty years ago – a unity of family life, a unity of parish experience, a unity of social life – is a thing of the past.

Berger pointed out that we must just as effectively evangelize our own as we must work to evangelize others. Educational programs – Sunday schools, adult programs, etc. – are the primary means we have for educating our own. In his last published article, John Boojamra wrote: “In the twenty-first century formal pedagogy will be the single most important ministry in the Church, especially when the culture in which we have chosen to live or which we have ourselves created supports less and less what Christians deem virtuous and ethical.”<sup>8</sup> Unfortunately, as Orthodox in America, we do not have a strong tradition of educating our people in faith. We do not have a strong tradition of establishing and supporting educational institutions in a way that permits them to flourish *as* educational institutions. We are still too cynical about our own church-run educational systems, so we do not support them, and as a result we maintain our cynicism about them. If we take Boojamra’s prediction seriously, we have a lot of work to do in the education of our children and ourselves.

In my work thus far, I have taken a threefold approach to the educational ministry of the Church. I have argued that Orthodox education should “inform, form and transform” learners. In my proposal, all members of the community are envisioned as learners and teachers, because we are created for growth and none of us can cease growing in faith. Without going into too much detail, I think being informed is self-explanatory. We should be well-informed Orthodox Christians, from the basics of naming the sacraments and growing into the details of explaining the particulars of Chalcedonian Christology. To be formed is to recognize that as Orthodox we have a distinctive way of being Christian, reading a text, examining an issue, expressing a response. We are shaped by the particularity of the Orthodox community of faith, which is different from the Methodist or Baptist community of faith and the way they live out their Christian faith, explore issues, and come to answers. Finally, we

are called by God to be transformed into God-like beings, living and knowing as God intends us to live. We call this “theosis,” deification, or divinization. I call this iconic living and knowing.<sup>9</sup>

This manner of viewing our educational aims permits us as Orthodox to become involved in multiple layers and manners of educational ministry and practice, from parish to colleges and universities. Thus our educational task is to be engaged in all of them and at the levels that each involves. Let me say a little about each.

*Parish level.* Parish-based education is where most of us will learn what we need to know as Orthodox Christians. Notice that I did not say Sunday or Church school. As Orthodox we have to come to realize that “the church does not *have* an educational program, it *is* an educational program.”<sup>10</sup> Everything that the parish does either educates or miseducates us about some aspect of being an Orthodox Christian. Authoritarian or despotic leadership expressed by either lay or ordained members of the Church can easily erase the lesson about the conciliarity of the Church. The Church or Sunday school is just one part of that totality.

The problem with Sunday school is that this program is aimed at children and teenagers. John Boojamra was correct when he argued that this was probably doing us more harm because Christianity is an adult religion, formed and framed in adult-oriented concepts, terms and expectations.<sup>11</sup> One of the reasons, I believe, “converts” know the content of Orthodoxy better than “cradle” Orthodox is that the convert learned the content as an adult while the cradle Orthodox learned it as a child. Focusing on children has resulted in the “trivial pursuit” approach to acquiring Orthodox knowledge. Placing this within the schooling model has also undermined what paying attention to a church service (in a comprehensible language and style) or serving the poor can teach a believer.

So, our task is to unleash the educational possibilities of parish life, in spite of the challenges that I outlined above. We should continue to educate children, but we need to change perspective enough to focus on adult learning. Adults should be the focus of our educational ministry, through intelligent, informed and inspiring preaching, intentional levels of study from beginning to advanced, actively engaging people in ministries of service within the parish and outside of the parish and educating them along the way *for* that ministry and *by* that ministry. If our children see their parents reading the Bible, going to church, praying, serving, caring and learning about their faith, then the Sunday school program will be far more successful. Parents will be better teachers because they are better learners and children will be better learners because they are being nurtured in a community and a family that prays, learns and serves.

*Parochial schools.* The Greek Archdiocese has had a number of parish-based schools since the early days of the Archdiocese, chiefly in the large concentrations of Greeks: Lowell, Massachusetts, New York City, Chicago and more recently, Houston, Texas and Northridge, California. There have only been a handful of attempts at high schools. There has been only limited study of the elementary schools, I believe, over the years.

However, in the last ten years, we have seen renewed interest in the creation of elementary schools by parishes and interested Orthodox Christian parents, and not only from Greek Orthodox, but others as well. To name two: Theophany School outside of Boston is an independent, pan-Orthodox school. The Holy Trinity parish in Dallas has recently opened a school. There are also many Orthodox preschools springing up in parishes. Perhaps these will flower into elementary schools. To my knowledge there has been no data collected on these newer schools. Also, we see a growing “home schooling” movement among Orthodox parents.

From my observations, and this is still just an impression, we can see a few causes for the recent interest in schools. First, as more and more parents are dissatisfied with the public schools in a particular area, parishes are wondering whether they can fill a need. I have observed two areas of dissatisfaction with public schools. One was with the general quality of education in a particular area. We have seen this in some of the parochial schools in New York, which have many non-Greek, non-Orthodox students. I saw this with the creation of Theophany School in Boston, of which I served as a board member. Many parents were not happy with the Boston Public Schools and were looking for other options. Second was a “conservative,” occasionally fundamentalist backlash against schools: unhappiness with the pluralism of schools, e.g., no Christmas anymore, content areas of education, a tolerant attitude about sexual matters, evolution being taught in the sciences, general relativism towards truth and other matters. Some of these parents were also looking for “pure Orthodoxy” for their children, and thus, would not even consider schools from other Christian traditions.

A third, more interesting issue I encountered was that parents were looking for the “wholesome experiences” that they remember nostalgically from their school days and a time when life revolved more tightly around the parish. These parents realized that in the parish-based school they had a chance of recreating for their children the kinds of experiences that they so fondly remembered. Since their lives prevented every afternoon and evening from being centered on the church, these parents felt that those same experiences could be recreated in a parish-based school.

The challenges of opening and sustaining a parish-based school are immense. The financial resources needed to operate a good school are huge. Even parishes with tremendous financial resources find it a struggle. The choices are difficult. Either attempt to open grades 1-6 all at once, with all the



investment necessary going up front or try to grow a school. Most parishes have opted for the “growing a school” model. Start with first grade or kindergarten and every year expand up one grade. Even if the financial and resource hurdles are overcome, the greatest challenge is asking parents to trust the education of their children to a school with no track record and, in the Orthodox case, a church without a strong tradition of educational institutions.

So, I generally believe that parochial schools are not the way to go for most communities. In a few places they will probably be viable, and the question will be their educational success. I believe our real task is to get involved in the public arena on educational questions, challenge our school districts and government agencies to provide resources and creative solutions to the public school issue.

*Higher education and theological education.* While these really are two areas, I will try to discuss them as one. The issue of higher education is truly problematic. So far there are only two experiments in higher education by Orthodox in America: Hellenic College and Rose Hill, in Aiken, South Carolina, which is now closed. Rose Hill, which began in the 1980s as an Orthodox college, closed just a few years later for lack of funds and lack of students. Hellenic College, which began in 1968 as an offshoot of the undergraduate studies program of Holy Cross Greek Orthodox School of Theology, has had a roller coaster ride of expansion and contraction. From 1968 it grew to a peak of 275 students in the late 1970s and early 1980s, then because of a lack of financial resources, began to contract to a virtual shut down in 1985. From 1985 to 1991 or so, it floundered with forty or so students; from 1992 to 1995 it began to grow, reaching a population approaching 100, then began to decline again. In the last few years, we have seen it grow again. The issues for Hellenic College to flourish are the following: First, developing a faculty of scholars in a range of disciplines who

are also committed to the holistic and balanced approach of Orthodox Christianity to inquiry, whether these scholars are Orthodox, Greek, or not. Second, developing a student population large enough to sustain the college, but of high enough quality to be intellectually stimulating and to prepare the student for a gainful life after college, again whether these students are Orthodox, Greek, or not. Third, developing a broad curriculum that will be attractive enough for scholars and students alike to participate.

When people are asked, everyone says proudly that the Orthodox community, really meaning the Greek community, has reached a point in its development when it can support “one college” in the United States. While there are certainly individuals with the resources to fund college activity for the Orthodox, so far these individuals are donating their millions to well-established, well-respected and prestigious institutions of higher learning. Possibly more importantly, they are not encouraging their children and grandchildren to attend a church-sponsored college.

The underlying issue is the same. The church does not have a strong record in institutions of higher learning. The Orthodox Church did not create the universities as medieval Roman Catholicism did. Orthodoxy did not experience the Renaissance or the Enlightenment, which broke the Roman Church’s control over and exclusive hold on the search for truth – science.

The irony of this should be readily apparent. The Orthodox Church, which in its earliest history produced some of the greatest thinkers of the day – Chrysostom, Basil, Gregory – did not develop institutions that could continue to produce great thinkers as the disciplines of knowledge also expanded. Today, the Church can act more as a reactionary force against the development of knowledge, including theological knowledge.

In addition, the church has yet to develop a pool of professionals with both a deep knowledge of the Orthodox Tradition and

expertise in areas of educational administration. By and large, the church has relied on persons with knowledge of one side of the equation. As a result, we lose faith in theologians or clergy without educational administration backgrounds or we are uncomfortable with educational professionals advising clergy about how to administer the institution in a more effective manner. Also, given the lack of institutions throughout North America, where someone could gain the varied experience that could lead to effective educational administration, we are relying on parish experiences transferring to institutions of higher education, which are increasingly becoming more technical and challenging to run effectively.

In terms of theological education, Holy Cross and St. Vladimir's are well-respected Orthodox schools. Both schools have seen recent surges in enrollment and are near capacity. There are issues about the number of priesthood candidates, especially at Holy Cross. Both faculties are engaged internationally on a wide variety of issues. But both faculties are changing. St. Vladimir's Seminary is steadily handing the reins over to younger scholars, whose futures are yet to be shaped. Holy Cross is just now beginning to experience the retirements of its older faculty. Because of the recent turmoil there, however, they have not been as successful at retaining their younger faculty. St. Tikhon's Seminary of the OCA is still under the radar screens of most of us. However, it has a competent group of scholars teaching there. The seminary has reached Associate status in the Association of Theological Schools. Hopefully in a few years, it will receive accreditation by ATS.

A final area of graduate theological education is the existence of centers like the Patriarch Athenagoras Orthodox Institute at the Graduate Theological Union in Berkeley, California. With its brand-new Master of Arts in Orthodox Christian Studies at the Graduate Theological Union, the Spanos chair in Orthodox studies, library, facilities and

campus fellowship, the Institute presents three possibilities for Orthodoxy in America. First, the Institute can become a model for establishing similar centers of Orthodox study at other universities or colleges. These could become centers for Orthodox Christian Fellowships with some instructional components. But in those colleges and universities where there are divinity schools or religious studies programs, and in communities that can generate strong local financial support, there are more possibilities. The church needs a handful of institutes in major centers, offering various levels of education, from community-oriented programs to college level, whether as an undergraduate minor to a few offering graduate degrees. What the church does not need is many one-scholar institutes springing up across America, struggling to sustain themselves and teaching only one or two students. In all cases, I would advocate an inter-Orthodox approach to these centers, notwithstanding the challenges that Orthodox cooperation can present. Of course, the challenge will be absorbing all these well-educated people in parish life with careers that can sustain them financially, as we are already seeing with some graduates of our seminaries today. For example, the many women graduates who are as well-trained as any clergyman, but are relegated to secretarial work in the parish – if there is a parish willing to hire them.

To sum up, the greatest educational task for Orthodoxy in America is to establish a tradition of education, learning, scholarship and research as Orthodox in America. As individuals we take it very seriously and will go to great lengths to insure that our children have the best education possible because of the upward mobility it creates. As individuals, some of us have achieved power, wealth and status because of our education. However, as a community we don't take education seriously. We talk a lot about it, but ultimately we have not placed our resources into creating educational institutions that matter in American society.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> This paper was delivered originally to a Regional Forum of Orthodox Christian Laity, Las Vegas, Nevada, January, 2003. It has been edited and updated for publication. Moreover, this paper represents a larger project in which I hope to explore various aspects of the educational ministries of Orthodoxy in America.

<sup>2</sup> John Boojamra, *Foundations for Orthodox Christian Education* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1989), pp. 8-9.

<sup>3</sup> Thomas FitzGerald, "The Development of the Orthodox Parish in the United States." In Anton Vrame, ed. *The Orthodox Parish in America: Faithfulness to the Past, Responsibility for the Future* (Brookline, MA: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 2004), pp. 11-32.

<sup>4</sup> Charles Joanides. *When You Intermarry: A Resource for inter-Christian, Intercultural Couples, Parents, and Families* (New York: Greek Orthodox Archdiocese Books, 2002).

<sup>5</sup> Kieran Scott, "Three traditions of religious education," *Religious Education* 79 (1984).

<sup>6</sup> Mary Boys, *Educating in Faith: Maps and Visions* (San Francisco: Harper and Row Publishers, 1989), p. 51.

<sup>7</sup> Peter Berger, "Orthodoxy and the Pluralistic Challenge." In Anton Vrame, ed. *The Orthodox Parish in America: Faithfulness to the Past, Responsibility for the Future*. (Brookline, MA: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 2004), pp. 33-42.

<sup>8</sup> John Boojamra, "Translating Our Vision: The ethical Dimension." *St. Nersess Theological Review* 5-6 (2000-01), p. 147.

<sup>9</sup> See Anton C. Vrame, *The Educating Icon: Teaching Wisdom and Holiness in the Orthodox Way* (Brookline, MA: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 1999), especially chapter 5.

<sup>10</sup> Maria Harris. *Fashion Me a People: Curriculum in the Church* (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1989), p. 47.

<sup>11</sup> John Boojamra, *Foundations*, pp. 8-9.

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## **The Effect of Training Workshops on Retention of Parish Religious Educators in the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America**

FRANK MARANGOS

### **Synopsis**

The Department of Religious Education (DRE) of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America implemented two-day teacher training workshops in the fall of 1997. The intention of the workshops was to help enhance confidence, increase instructional capabilities and extend the service of volunteer parish religious educators.

Because parish leaders of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America have complained of a low retention rate of their religious education teachers, the purpose of this study was to determine if the training workshops affected the retention rate of its participants. In particular, this study was interested in comparing the retention rate of parish religious educators who attended training workshops with those who did not attend. Consequently, there was one research question for this study: "Is there a relationship between attendance at a two-day regional teacher training workshop and retention of teachers?"

Four procedures were used to complete this research study. The first procedure was to conduct a review of related literature that included the topics of: (a) retention, (b) volunteer education and training, and (c) adult education.

Second, retention rate data was obtained from a previously implemented religious education climate survey of parishes throughout the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America between 1998-2000. A manual calculation was done to divide the raw climate survey data concerning retention into two groups: (a) teachers who attended workshops, and (b) teachers who did not attend. Finally, the retention rates of the two groups were analyzed using a Chi Square test.

The sample used in this study represents 2947 religious education teachers from 500 Greek Orthodox parishes throughout the United States. The sample of retention rates was obtained from a previously-conducted religious education climate survey of these parishes. This number represents 53% of the 500 parishes of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese. The sample of 2947 teachers was divided into two groups. Group A consisted of 821 teachers who attended the training workshops. Group B included the retention rates of 2126 teachers who did not attend the in-service training workshop.

The study determined that there is a significant difference between the retention rate of parish religious education teachers who attend regional training workshops and teachers who do not attend. The outcome of the Chi Square analysis was 177.968, and based on a region of rejection of 5.99, the null hypothesis was rejected.

The Orthodox Archdiocese in America should recognize the positive effect of ongoing training on the retention rate of volunteer-based parish religious educators. It was therefore recommended that the Department of Religious Education of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese should continue offering regional training workshops for religious educators throughout America. Finally, it was recommended that the effectiveness of the current teacher training workshops should not be determined by this study alone, but should be evaluated in a more comprehensive fashion in the future.



## INTRODUCTION

The Department of Religious Education (DRE) is responsible for coordinating the overall parish religious education programming of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America. Since the Fall of 1998 the director of the Religious Education Department has been conducting two-day teacher training workshops throughout the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America. The purpose of these workshops is to help enhance confidence, increase instructional capabilities and extend the service of volunteer parish religious educators.

The DRE is currently in need of measuring the effects of its teacher training workshops. In particular, the DRE is interested in determining the effect of training workshops on retention of parish religious education teachers.

### *Nature of the Problem*

In 1997 the Department of Religious Education of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America assessed the educational climate of its parishes. The DRE utilized a valid instrument, the Religious Education Climate Survey (RECS) for this purpose. The data revealed that the majority of parish religious education teachers have a low retention rate of service. It was reported that the majority of religious education teachers serve between 0-3 years (Marangos, 1998). If parish religious education programming is to be successful it is essential that the local parish administration find ways of increasing the retention rate of its teachers. Consequently, a regional teacher training workshop was developed as a way of providing support and ongoing training for in-service parish religious educators.

The regional teacher training workshops began in the fall of 1998. The workshops are provided to approximately 500 active parishes belonging to the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America. The workshops were developed as a result of data

obtained from a national needs assessment survey conducted in 1997. Survey data indicated that teacher training was the first of the five most crucial educational parish needs of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese (Marangos, 1998).

The workshop is based on a 5-year strategic plan that includes an annual workshop theme that is provided to in-service parish religious educators who choose to attend. Workbooks are developed and provided to participants by the DRE to coincide with five annual workshop themes: (a) liturgics, (b) holy tradition, (c) patristics, (d) dogmatics, and (e) ethics.

Upon invitation, the director travels on weekends to various Archdiocesan parishes and conducts four ninety-minute modules based on one of the five major workshop themes. The training modules focus on: (a) content, (b) pedagogical theories and methodologies, (c) leadership, and (d) classroom techniques. At the conclusion of the two-day workshop, participants are given a professional development certificate of participation.

Funding for the regional workshop is scarce and may be curtailed by Archdiocesan leadership who base their allotment of financial assets on program effectiveness. One way of determining the success of the regional training workshop was to examine if it has been an effective means of extending the retention rate of parish religious educators who attend. The goal of this study was to determine whether there is a relationship between attendance at the regional workshop and the retention rate of parish religious educators.

### *Purpose of the Study*

The purpose of this research study will be to determine the relationship between attendance at a two-day regional teacher training workshop and the retention of teachers. By comparing the retention of parish religious educators who attend training workshops with those who do not,

the Department of Religious Education would be able to determine if training affects the number of years parishioners serve as parish teachers. Results would also be used to justify the continuation of regional training workshops conducted by the DRE.

### *Research Question*

There was only one research question for this study: "Is there a relationship between attendance at a two-day regional teacher training workshop and the retention of teachers?"

### *Research Hypothesis*

The research hypothesis for this study is that there is no relationship between attendance at regional religious education training workshop and the retention rate of teachers.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Some of the literature reported in this study is slightly more than five years old. However, their reference has been the foundation and catalyst for more recent research in the area of educational research and the administration of parish religious education. These basic documents are therefore appropriate background information for this study. The literature review includes the topics of volunteer education, volunteer training, adult education and teacher attrition.

### *Volunteer Education*

Charles Colson (1992) describes the 1990s as a decade in American history that represented an extraordinary shift of responsibility for human services from the government to the private sector (p. 88). According to Colson (1992), within the next ten years two-thirds of American adults (120 million people) will volunteer for five hours of work a week

(p. 88). Colson insist that such an increase would more than double the current available volunteer power in America (p. 88).

Colson (1992) suggests that this trend is the result of federal, state and local governments' financial shortfalls. Unable to continue offering welfare subsidies, the private sector will have to take up much of the governmental burden of assisting the underprivileged. Colson additionally argues, however, that the track record of the private voluntary sector is the more fundamental reason for the current shifting of responsibilities. "Government simply cannot match the effectiveness and efficiency of the non-profits" (Colson, 1992, p. 88).

Roehlkepartain (1992) outlines six basic reasons why people volunteer. They are: (1) altruistic, (2) educational, (3) career advancement, (4) peer pressure, (5) self esteem, and (6) to relieve guilt (p. 6). While the author insists that these different motives have important implications for rethinking volunteer recruitment and management, the motive of education is perhaps the most important.

Roehlkepartain (1992) asserts that the motive of volunteer education "parallels the recent emphasis on service-learning" (p. 6). He describes service-learning as an "experiential education" approach. As such, volunteers experience growth as a result of becoming actively involved in a "teachable moment of service" (p. 6). He suggests that this approach has significant possibilities for the education of adults by the Church (p. 6).

### *Volunteer Training*

Drucker (1993) describes well-managed volunteer organizations as having three characteristics (p. 220). They are (a) a clearly-defined mission, (b) using the board of directors as a resource, and (c) effective management of people (Drucker, 1993, p. 220).

Geber (1991) outlines seven elements of good volunteer management : (a) job descriptions, (b) contracts, (c) training and orientation, (d) performance appraisals, (e) terminations, (f) recognition, and (g) empowerment (Geber, 1991, p. 23). According to Geber (1991), training and orientation is a process that begins with interviews that focus on the volunteer's experience, skills and motivation.

Like Gerber (1991), Brudney (1990) suggests that the foundation for effective volunteer operation consists of five managerial elements: (a) organization, (b) matching volunteers to organizational needs, (c) education, (d) training and supervision, and (d) evaluation and recognition (pp. 96-97). For the purpose of this paper, the third and fourth elements are quite relevant.

Brudney (1990) suggests that orientation sessions can be used to educate incoming volunteers. Orientation sessions can be used "to familiarize volunteers with the philosophy, norms, traditions and basic rules and procedures of the sponsoring organization" (p. 96). Brudney insists that volunteer organizations would greatly benefit by conducting both pre-service orientations and in-service training.

Like Brudney (1990), Ilsley (1990) observes that volunteers learn through orientation, training, conversations with other volunteers, independent investigations and personal experience (p. 70). He underscores the fact that the reasons often given by volunteers for their respective learning were strongly linked to their commitment (Ilsley, 1990, p. 70).

Unlike Ilsley (1990), Garland (1992), on the other hand, outlines two major categories of training for Church volunteer workers (p. 260). They are: (a) foundational training for new recruits, and (b) in-service training to insure continuing growth in the ministries of currently involved volunteers (pp. 260-261). For Garland (1992), most training problems concern "volunteers who are already in place, who either don't accept the need for continuing training to remain

effective, or are frustrated because they know they need help, but it isn't being provided, and they do not know where to get it" (p. 261).

Choun and Lawson (1992) outline six procedures for creating a successful volunteer training program which have proved extremely effective over time (p. 141). They are: (a) annual in-service training events, (b) published curriculum with built-in training, (c) a well-furnished media center, (d) periodic conventions and seminars, (e) a routine for new teacher orientation, and (f) a profile recording of each teacher's training experience (pp. 141-142).

### *Adult Education*

Theories of adult learning are highly relevant to volunteer training. Knowles' (1984) theory of androgogy is a general theory for adult learning that emphasizes the importance of experience as well as self-direction and intrinsic motivation. The theory of androgogy also emphasizes the role of problem-solving and immediate value in learning activities. All of these qualities have been shown to be critical for volunteers.

The technology of androgogy includes a seven-step process: (a) set a cooperative learning process, (b) create mechanisms for mutual planning, (c) arrange for a diagnosis of learner needs and interests, (d) enable the formulation of learning objectives based on diagnosed needs and interests, (e) design sequential activities for achieving the objectives, (f) execute the design by selecting methods, materials and resources, and (g) evaluate the quality of the learning experience while re-diagnosing needs for further learning (Knowles, 1984).

Utilizing Knowles' theory of androgogy, Ilsley (1989) suggests that there are three simple but pervasive concepts that provide a basis for linking voluntary action and adult education" (p. 102). They are: (a) voluntary action provides learning potential for adults, (b) volunteer learning needs

evolve over time, and (c) volunteers remain in service longer, and exhibit a higher commitment when permitted to participate in the decision-making of their institutions (Ilsley, 1989, p. 102).

Ilsley (1990), defines a volunteer as someone who chooses to commit him/herself to a cause or to others “in a deliberate spirit of service in response to one or more perceived societal needs, within an organizational context, and in return for some psychic benefit” (p. 103). Ilsley (1990) outlines three types of volunteer learning for adults: (a) instrumental-didactic, (b) social-expressive, and (c) critical-reflective (pp. 62-64).

Ilsley (1990) describes instrumental-didactic learning as skill training (p.62). It emphasizes “uniformity, competence, technique and specialized language” (Ilsley, p. 62). Generally speaking, instrumental-didactic learning is characteristically used in situations where the “needs of the organization come first” (Ilsley, p. 62).

Social-expressive is the second type of volunteer learning outlined by Ilsley (1990, p. 63). This category of learning includes “communication, trust, respect, compassion and openness” (p. 63). The third type of volunteer learning is called critical-reflective. Ilsley (1990) suggests that such learning means “deliberately analyzing one’s own politics, values and priorities, as well as those of society” (p. 64). As such, this type of volunteer learning is characteristically found within social, political or religious movements.

Ilsley (1989) argues that the will for adults to offer themselves as volunteers is influenced by the amount of learning available to them (p. 102). As such, commitment to a cause, and the amount of learning with which volunteers are provided, should be linked. Ilsley (1989) insists that the kind of learning opportunities provided to volunteers influences their commitment and, therefore, their duration of service (p. 102). The author continues by citing additional data

that supports the conclusion that “motives for volunteering, individual needs and patterns of learning evolve” (p. 101).

Learning is a powerful motivator for voluntary action. The educational needs of volunteers are often linked to the object of their voluntary commitment. In order to design an effective educational scheme for voluntary action, local parishes should seriously consider the respective educational needs of each parish volunteer.

The effective management of volunteers depends upon correct identification of learning needs of volunteers and upon the provision of opportunities that encourage volunteers into higher levels of participation and learning. Ilsley (1990) suggests that the establishment of a positive environment for learning and provision of a wide variety of learning experiences are critical for attracting and retaining volunteers” (p. 70). As such, it can be argued that providing a suitable environment for learning will in turn extend the duration of voluntary service.

Ilsley (1990) warns that the “education of an organization’s members determines the organization’s efficacy” (p. 71). Volunteers find meaning from direct participation in voluntary enterprises, from problem solving, and from significant decision making (Ilsley, 1990, p, 101). Viewed in this fashion, training for volunteers is essentially a setting for adult learning. Since museum volunteers often acquire large amounts of historical information while working on the job, it should not be surprising to discover that church community volunteers learn a great deal about their own institutions in the same fashion. What is fascinating is the context of this indirect adult learning and how can we control and sustain such learning for the benefit of the volunteers and the service they provide.

### *Teacher Attrition*

According to the 1998 Condition of Education Indicator



issued by the US Department of Education National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES), teacher attrition is the largest single factor determining the demand for additional teachers in our nation's schools. The center advocates the need to study attrition patterns and their implications for the nation's future need for teachers as the current teacher work force ages.

The NCES reports that between the 1993-1995 school years, 33% of private school teachers left to pursue careers outside of the education field. The NCES also reports that 15% of public school teachers left during the same time period.

Croasmun, Hampton and Herrmann (2000) the problem of teacher attrition has become a national concern. They cite six factors that drive the issue of teacher attrition: (a) salaries, (b) marital status, (c) beginning teachers, (d) special education, (e) increasing experience, and (f) level of education (pp. 3-5). Croasmun et al. indicate that first-year teachers are 2.5 times more likely to leave their profession than their more experienced counterparts (p. 4). An additional 15% of beginning teachers will leave after their second year and an additional 10% will leave after their third year of teaching.

Like Brudney (1990), Croasmun et al. insist that the lack of administrative support and additional training are major factors contributing to the high degree of attrition among novice teachers. They warn that without ongoing professional training the attrition rate of public and private school teachers will continue to rise. The implications of high teacher attrition are: (a) hiring costs, (b) low student and school performance, (c) disruption of program continuity, (d) decrease of student performance, and (e) larger class size. Finally, the authors cite the appearance of non-certified teachers who have little or no formal preparation in student development, learning styles or teaching methods as an additional implication of high attrition (Croasmun et al., 2000, pp. 5-6).

Most reforms currently focus on providing administrative

support and developing the skill level of in-service teachers. These remedies are pursued by providing monthly in-service training, seminars and in-class performance assessment (Croasmun et al., 2000, p. 6). As such, Croasmun et al. (2000) suggest a connection between teachers' feelings of efficacy and attrition. They insist that ongoing teacher education programs and staff development seminars should be offered to in-service teachers (Croasmun et al., 2000, p. 6).

The GOALS 2000: Educate America Act links new and higher standards for student achievement to much-expanded professional development workshops for in-service teachers. These workshops are intended to: (a) enhance collaboration between teachers, (b) increase research, and (c) help teachers reflect upon teaching practices and student achievement. Croasmun et al. (2000) agree with the philosophy that undergirds GOALS 2000. They suggest that teachers who are more knowledgeable and attend ongoing professional development opportunities are more likely to remain in their profession for a longer period of time. Such teachers are also better prepared to serve their students (Croasmun et al., 2000, p. 8).

The National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES) reports that 20% of all novice teachers leave teaching within three years (1998). The NCES suggests five efforts that should be pursued to retain gifted teachers: (a) provide teachers with vital support in the first and second years of their teaching careers, (b) assign mentors to novice teachers, (c) provide and develop on-line CD-ROM products for support and professional training, (d) recruitment and retention grants to develop projects, and (e) community partnerships (1998).

An alternative to expanding preparation programs is to improve survival rates of teachers on the job. Felter (1997) reports that about one-half of the cohorts of first-time teachers survive past seven years, with a greater number of teachers leaving the profession after their first or second year.

Teachers who are given in-service support persist longer in their jobs. Higher rates of qualified teachers would result in the establishment of a more stable, satisfied and competent workforce. An additional benefit is that better-supported teachers would be more effective in their jobs and assist more students to higher levels of achievement (Felter, 1997, p. 11).

According to the 2000 Learning the Ropes national survey conducted by Recruiting New Teachers, Inc. (RNT), support services for novice teachers can mean the difference between staying in or leaving the teaching profession entirely. Nationally, more than 20% of public school teachers leave their profession within three years while 9.3% leave before completing their first year of public school teaching (RNT, 2000).

The RNT recommends that induction and training programs are needed to extend the preparation period of novice teachers through their crucial first years on the job so that they continue to develop as proficient, knowledgeable and successful teachers. Consequently, they encourage schools leaders to take the following steps to meet the need and retain novice teachers: (a) view training as a multi-year developmental process, (b) ensure that school administrators know how to provide training programs, (c) provide first-class mentoring programs, (d) link training to district standards, (e) invest in training, and (f) evaluate program effectiveness (RNT, 2000).

## METHODOLOGY AND PROCEDURES

### *Data Collection*

Four procedures were used to complete this research study. The first procedure was to conduct a review of related literature. The review included the topics of retention, training workshops and adult education. Answers to the

following two questions were pursued: (a) Do training workshops affect the rate of retention of educators, and (b) What principles of adult education should be considered when providing training workshops for in-service teachers?

The second procedure was to gather the retention rates of religious education teachers in parishes throughout the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America. A manual calculation of retention data obtained from a previously conducted religious education climate survey was performed. A validated questionnaire was used to survey the educational climate of parishes throughout the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America between 1998-2000.

The next procedural step involved the calculation of the retention rates of two groups of religious education teachers. A manual calculation was done to divide the raw data from the climate survey concerning retention into two groups: (a) teachers who attended workshops, and (b) teachers who did not attend.

The fourth and final procedure involved the analysis of the retention rates of the two groups. A Chi Square test was used. The sample used for this analysis was 1,621 teachers. The results of the test are presented in both tabular and numerical form in the result section of this report.

### *Description of Population*

The population measured consisted of all parish religious education teachers of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America.

### *Sample*

The sample represents 63% of the total number of religious educators that belong to the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America. This total represents 2947 religious educators who completed and returned the 2000 Religious Education Climate Survey (RECS) to the Department of Religious Education.

The sample was divided into two groups. Group A included teachers who attended religious education training workshops. Group B included teachers who did not attend. The RECS did not request information from respondents concerning what factors influenced the decision to attend or not attend the religious education workshop.

### *Treatment*

The Director of Religious Education has been conducting Religious Education Teacher Workshops throughout the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America. Upon invitation, the Religious Education Director of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese travels on weekends to various Archdiocesan parishes and conducts three interrelated seminars that examine: liturgical life, patristic theology and teaching methodology. The seminars are primarily directed to parish religious educators. Workshop attendance is based on a self-selecting process.

Each workshop includes three ninety-minute seminars (see Appendix). The purpose of the workshop is to familiarize parish religious educators with the liturgical and patristic content of the Orthodox Church in light of the most current catechetical methods, techniques and theories of religious education. Participants are provided with the opportunity to: (a) examine the liturgical and patristic content of the Orthodox Church in a systematic fashion, and (b) discuss the implementation of successful catechetical methods and techniques.

The three ninety-minute presentations are given in a lecture format. In order to effectively maintain the attention of the participants, the director has developed and employs a computer-generated multimedia presentation during each workshop session. Adequate time is provided during each presentation for questions and discussion. Although each session focuses on the examination of Orthodox liturgical

and patristic theology, special attention is given to the implementation of the content through the use of the most current teaching methods and parish classroom techniques.

### *Data Analysis*

The data was arranged in a two by three tabular format. The table included the number of teachers who attended workshops and the number of teachers who did not attend. Retention of these two groups was measured according to low (0-3 years), moderate (4-9 years) and high (10 + years) frequencies.

### *Null Hypothesis*

There was one null hypothesis for this study. The null hypothesis was: "There will be no significant difference between the retention rate of parish volunteer religious education teachers who attend regional training workshops and teachers who do not attend."

### *Level of Significance*

In order to increase confidence in rejecting the null hypothesis a significance level of .05 was used. This level is conventionally used in social science research as a balance between Type I and II errors.

### *Region of Rejection*

The region of rejection was a value of Chi Square that falls into a region where the probability is less than .05 level of significance. Since the hypothesis indicates a direction of difference a one-tailed region of rejection was not calculated.

### *Statistical Test*

A non-parametric statistical test was used to compare frequencies of categorical data. Typically, a Chi Square non-parametric test is chosen to determine whether the

frequencies observed deviate significantly from a theoretical or expected population frequency where frequency refers to categories and where the data is classified. A Chi square test at .05 significance level for a two by three table was conducted.

### *Assumptions*

This study was based on the following assumptions: (a) that the 2000 Religious Education Climate Survey (RECS) was a valid and reliable questionnaire for obtaining data concerning teacher retention and workshop attendance, and (b) religious educators come from parishes that do not differ significantly in age, size, socioeconomic level, administration, and doctrinal matters. It was further assumed that instructors have a similar orientation to their teaching duties.

### *Limitations*

Several limitations apply to the conclusions of this study. First, the data and information gathered through this research was made on the basis of a sample made up of individuals who accepted the invitation to participate. It cannot be assumed, therefore, that this sample is necessary representative of the target population which also includes religious educators who chose not to participate. As such, the data should not be generalized to organizations or programs other than those specified. This is commonly referred to as the "interaction of selection and treatment" and constitutes a threat to the external validity ( Best, & Kahn, 1998, pp. 168-169).

Second, the major threat to the internal validity of this study's conclusions pertains to the potential influence of factors other than the training workshop on the retention rates of parish religious educators. Uncontrollable extraneous incidents that may have occurred outside the context of this study, the inability of the researcher to determine the effect of maturation on the attitudes and knowledge of teachers who

participated in the workshop, as well as the unintentional influences of the workshop leader to replicate the exact treatment on the participants are examples of major types of extraneous threats to this study's internal validity (McMillan & Schumacher, 1993, pp. 172-178).

Finally, as this study is based on an ex post facto research design, Best and Kahn (1998) delineate the following inherent limitations: (a) independent variables cannot be manipulated, (b) subjects cannot be randomly assigned to treatment groups, and (c) causes are often multiple and complex rather than single and simple (p. 138).

## RESULTS

A literature review was conducted concerning the topics of: (a) volunteer training, (b) theories of adult education, and (c), teacher retention. The results of the literature review provided an overview of the kind of treatments that have been provided to in-service teachers to increase their retention rates. This area of research is limited to public and secular institutions of higher education. Little is available concerning the kinds of training programs developed for local parish religious educators. Consequently, the results of the literature review indicated that limited research has been conducted on the effects of training on the retention rates of parish religious educators (Choun et al., 1992).

Retention rates from other educational institutions were culled from the literature review. While rates were seen to vary between the institutions examined, a generalized statement of the relationship of training to retention can be provided. While independent factors can influence retention, several authors suggest that offering training to in-service teachers affects their retention (Brudney, 1990; Gerber, 1991; Ilsley, 1990; Roehlkepartain, 1992).

The literature review further resulted in the identification



that no retention rates for religious education teachers in the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America exist prior to 1998. The database that contains retention records was established in 1998.

Retention rates for the two-year period of 1999-2000 were collected through the development and use of a Religious Education Climate Survey (RECS). Marangos (2000) recommended that an examination should be conducted of the raw data to determine if a relationship exists between training and retention.

### *Retention Rate Results*

The population used included religious education teachers from 500 Greek Orthodox parishes throughout the United States. The retention rate of 2947 teachers was obtained from a previously-conducted religious education climate survey of these parishes. This number represents 53% of the 500 parishes of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese.

The sample of 2947 teachers was divided into two groups. Group A is comprised of 821 teachers who attended the training workshops. Group B includes the retention rates of 2126 teachers who did not attend the in-service training workshop. Table 1 lists the retention result rates for each group.

**Table 1**  
*Retention Rates for Groups A and B*

GROUP	0-2 Years	3-5 years	6+ Years	TOTALS
Group A Attended Workshop	0	216	605	821
Group B Did Not Attend Workshop	120	990	1016	2126
TOTALS	120	1206	1621	2947

The expected frequency for each retention value was computed by multiplying the column totals by the row totals for each cell in Table 1. This sum was divided by the number of teachers in the total sample. Table 2 lists the observed and expected frequencies of each group.

**Table 2**  
*Observed and Expected Frequencies*

OBSERVED	0-2 Years	3-5 years	6+ Years
Group A	0	216	605
Group B	120	990	1016
TOTALS	120	1206	1621
EXPECTED			
Group A	33.4	336	451.5
Group B	86.5	870	1169.4

A manual Chi Square analysis was conducted using the values indicated in Table 2. A degree of freedom value of two, a .05 level of significance, and region of rejection of 5.99 was used. The Chi Square value was 177.968. Since the Chi Square value of 177.968 fell well outside the region of rejection, the decision was made to reject the null hypothesis: "There will be no significant difference between the retention rate of parish religious education teachers who attend regional training workshops and teachers who do not attend." The Chi Square analysis is presented in table 3.

**Table 3**  
*Chi Square Analysis*

OBSERVED	EXPECTED	O - E	(O-E) <sup>2</sup>	$\frac{(O-E)^2}{E}$
0	33	-33	1089	33
120	86	34	1156	13.4
216	336	-120	14,400	42.8
990	870	120	14,400	16.5
605	451	154	23,716	52.5
1016	1169	153	23,409	20.3
				X <sup>2</sup> = 177.968

$$X^2 = \frac{\text{Observed} - \text{Expected}}{\text{Expected}} = 177.968$$

The statistical outcome of 177.968 fell outside the region of rejection. The null hypothesis must therefore be rejected.

## DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### *Discussion*

The purpose of this study was to determine the effect of training workshops on the retention rate of religious education teachers in the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America. The literature reviewed revealed that although retention is a topic that is frequently studied by business as well as private and public educational institutions as well as industry-related organizations, religious institutions have rarely undertaken such research (Croasmun et al., 2000; Felter, 1997). One of the issues that make the determination of retention a difficult task is the consequence of extraneous and unrelated variables (Felter, 2000).

While teacher retention rates may be one way of determining the success of in-service training workshops, it should not be considered the only measure of its usefulness (Choun et al., 1992). The population, history, gender and nationality of each parish is often significantly different across the country and, as such, may jeopardize external validity. In addition, the typical religious educator is a volunteer with job and family responsibilities and not necessarily interested in pursuing a long-term tenure of parish teaching (Garland, 1992).

One of the extraneous factors that can affect retention rate is the fact that most parish religious education teachers have children who are students in their respective educational program. When children graduate from their local religious education program, teachers who are also parents often quit without fear of reprisal. This phenomenon affects continuity and the experience-level of the teaching staff. Given this factor, it is difficult to judge the reason for the retention rates of parish religious educators based solely on attendance at in-service training workshops. Nor should the workshop itself be judged by teacher retention rates alone.

Croasmun et al. (2000) sums up the retention rate debate by insisting that the lack of administrative support and additional training are major factors that contribute to the high degree of attrition among teachers. Consequently, there was an expectation prior to the analysis of the data that the retention rates of teachers who attended in-service training workshop would be greater than those who did not attend.

Several factors such as maturation, selection and the lack of specific workshop instructional criteria should be considered when considering the internal validity of the workshop treatment. Nonetheless, it was expected that teachers who were provided the opportunity to receive training in effective pedagogical theories, methodology and course content would be more likely to remain in their volunteer-based teaching position.

While the internal as well as external factors mentioned above should be considered when evaluating the validity of this study, the data proved the expectation to be correct. Seventy-three percent of teachers who attended training workshops had a retention rate of ten or more years. Only forty-seven percent of teachers who did not attend training workshops remained in their position for ten or more years. Twenty-six percent of surveyed teachers who attended workshops indicated a retention rate of nine or less years. This is a significantly lower rate than the fifty-two percent of teachers who did not attend training workshops.

### *Conclusions*

We have observed throughout this study that training workshops positively affect the retention rate of parish religious educators. From the analysis of the data it may be concluded that training workshops have an effect on the retention rate of religious education teachers. This study indicated that there is a significant difference in the retention rates of teachers who participated in an in-service training

workshop with those who did not attend.

The voluntary sector of the church is an important context for continuing education. The Archdiocese should therefore seriously consider the connection between the quality of learning and the duration of voluntary service.

The methodology used in this study could have been improved by: (a) matching samples according to teaching experience, age and gender, (b) matching samples according to the frequency of in-service training workshop attendance, and (c) continuing the study over a larger period of time to determine if the frequency of workshop attendance influences the retention rates between samples. By better controlling treatment and the extraneous variables in this fashion, internal and external validity could be more effectively evaluated.

### *Implications*

Providing in-service training workshops for parish religious education teachers may increase the retention rate of the participants. Attendance may also encourage teachers to remain in their volunteer educational ministry for a longer period of time. If in-service parish religious instructors are provided with ongoing training opportunities that examine pedagogical theories, instructional techniques and course content they are more likely to remain in their teaching position for ten or more years.

The pedagogical practice of parish religious education programming has often been limited because of inexperienced teaching staffs. This situation can be remedied by suggesting that teachers attend ongoing training workshops. By participating in such training initiatives, parishes will be able to increase the retention rate of its volunteer-based teaching staff. Consequently, the pedagogical practice of parish religious educators will improve through experience and training. By implication, encouraging teachers to attend training workshops, parish religious education administrators

will: (a) decrease the number of teachers who resign after only a few years of service, and (b) develop a more informed and experienced teaching staff.

### *Recommendations*

Seven general recommendations can be outlined as a result of this research study. First, the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese in America (GOA) should develop a comprehensive training program for parish religious education teachers. Presentation of articles from professional journals can be used to help church leaders understand that their volunteer-based parish educational staff is one of the most critical assets in their organization. These teachers deserve to be valued, trained and developed in order to help them reach their potential and to make certain that they understand and utilize the most effective pedagogical theories, methodologies and classroom techniques.

The development of a more comprehensive training program for parish religious education teachers should be pursued by first creating a tentative plan based on input gained from studying volunteer-based teacher training programs of other religious organizations. The design should take the Orthodox theological understanding of anthropology and its ethic of stewardship into consideration. Ongoing presentations of the initial scheme of such a comprehensive training initiative should be provided to the finance department of the GOA from the beginning. Without budgetary assistance such a program will never succeed.

Second, the retention rates of parish religious educators in the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese should be gathered every two years by the Department of Religious Education (DRE). The Religious Education Climate Survey can be utilized for this purpose. The data should be reviewed and disseminated throughout the archdiocesan, diocesan and parish administrative levels. This can be done through



existing newsletters, workshops and Web-based information systems.

Third, the Religious Education Climate Survey should be revised to include questions that may provide more information concerning other potential variables that may influence the retention of rate of parish religious educators. In this fashion the DRE may investigate the internal validity threats within this study. The DRE could establish a committee of research experts in order to undertake such an investigation. Factors other than workshop attendance can be evaluated against retention-rate data.

Fourth, it was recommended that the results of this study be compared with the retention rates of other Orthodox jurisdictions in America. The comparison would be particularly beneficial if measured against parishes within similar geographic and metropolitan areas.

Fifth, since the results of this study indicate a favorable relationship between workshop attendance and the retention rates of parish religious educators, the DRE should initiate an ongoing evaluation of its training workshop. The effectiveness of the current teacher training workshop should not be determined by the conclusions of this study alone. By evaluating its workshops in a more comprehensive ongoing fashion, the DRE will be able to make certain that the training it provides is based on the most current and effective pedagogical theories and practices.

Sixth, it was recommended that the results from this study be communicated to the chancellor of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America and used as a basis of any change or improvement to current religious education teacher training programming. Furthermore, the data from this study should be shared with the Archdiocesan Council, the administrative leadership body of the GOA, for future strategic planning and action.

Finally, it was recommended that further research is needed

concerning the relationship of teacher training workshop attendance and the retention rates of parish religious educators. The director of the Religious Education Department of the GOA should conduct a more extensive study that would also include the examination of other potential variables that may influence the retention rate of parish religious educators.

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## Editor's Note

The Greek Orthodox Theological Review was established in 1954 by the Faculty of Holy Cross with the blessing and encouragement of the late Archbishop Michael of America, the Exarch of the Ecumenical Patriarchate. The dean of the School, the late Fr. Nikon Patrinos, served as the first editor of the *Review* and gave it valuable direction in its early years.

The establishment of the *Review* was a clear indication that the faculty of Holy Cross wanted an academic journal through which perspectives on the Orthodox Christian faith, spirituality and history could be offered to a wider audience of scholars and Church leaders from many traditions. The establishment of the *Review* demonstrated that the faculty would not yield to a narrow parochialism, which limited the breadth and depth of Orthodox theological witness.

From the beginning, the *Review* has been concerned both with examining historical themes and with engaging the critical theological issues facing the Church today. It has been a valuable journal through which scholarly studies have been shared, new books have been reviewed, and significant documents have been preserved. Indeed, the *Review* has contributed to the advancement of theological studies and the development of the Church not only in North America but also throughout the world.

Over the years, many members of the faculty have served with distinction as editors of the *Review*. Others have made substantial contributions. As a graduate student, I was

first encouraged by the late Fr. George Tsoumas to make a contribution to its pages. Some years later, the late Fr. N. Michael Vaporis invited me to be involved in the editorial work of the *Review*. He was a distinguished editor who was profoundly devoted to the mission of the *Review* and who sustained it through some difficult periods.

I am deeply honored that Fr. Nicholas C. Triantafilou, the President of Hellenic College and Holy Cross Greek Orthodox School of Theology, has invited me to serve as the new editor of *The Greek Orthodox Theological Review*. With the blessings of His Eminence Archbishop Demetrios, I have accepted this invitation. I look forward to the assistance and the continued contributions of my colleagues to the *Review*.

Thomas FitzGerald  
February 1, 2004









## **Letter from the Meeting of Orthodox Bishops**

Washington, DC May 1-3, 2001

3 May 2001

To our Beloved, the Faithful Clergy and Laity of the Holy Orthodox Church throughout North America,

We greet you in the name of the Risen Lord, Jesus Christ: Christ is Risen!

At the invitation of His Eminence Archbishop Demetrios, and the other Hierarchs of the Standing Conference of Canonical Orthodox Bishops in the Americas (SCOBA), we have gathered together in Washington, D.C. for the past three days to discuss issues of concern for the entire Orthodox Church in North America. Numbering thirty-four Hierarchs, we represent every canonical Orthodox Diocese, Archdiocese and Church that our good and loving Lord has planted here in North America. It has been an historic meeting, only the second time we have gathered in such a forum. Mindful of the presence of our Lord, we have prayed together; we have engaged in theological reflection; we have come to know each other better; and in here in our nation's capital we have given witness to our Orthodox Christian faith.

As we came together, we were heartened by words of encouragement and prayer from the heads of our Holy Orthodox Churches. His All Holiness Patriarch Bartholomew of Constantinople said, "the spiritual unity of the Orthodox Church and the harmonious collaboration among her



Hierarchs, clergy and people [must] be demonstrated, so that the existing organizational status not be interpreted as dissonance in faith and unity.” His Holiness Patriarch Maxim of Bulgaria greeted us “with brotherly love and the belief that you will labor with endeavors worthy of praise for the benefit of Holy Orthodoxy.” His Beatitude Patriarch Teoctist of Romania pointed to our gathering here as “a foretaste of whatever will fully occur with the help of God and by ways only know by Him for achieving the full unity of the Church of Christ on the American continent.”

The Millennium Pastoral Letter of the SCOBA Hierarchs *“And the Word Became Flesh and Dwelt Among Us...”* formed the framework for our discussions and conclusions. This was extremely appropriate because that Letter is first and foremost a missionary document. It is the proclamation of the Gospel that brings us together even as it enlivens the Church. As the Letter says, “Our intention is to make the Gospel of our Lord and God and Savior Jesus Christ known and embraced by more and more people in this land to which God has called us.” [5]

In his opening presentation Archbishop Demetrios immediately drew our attention to the challenges facing us in North America both as Church and society at this dawn of the 21st century. He highlighted six areas for our reflection: the area of bioethics and biomedical engineering; the challenges facing the institution of marriage and the family; the increasing relativization of everything where “truth” has become a matter of opinion; the developments in information technologies and the ways in which the Church might make use of these; the challenges affecting society and environment; and lastly, the challenge of offering our society the gift of our Orthodox spirituality.

Bishop Joseph of the Antiochian Orthodox Archdiocese offered us reflections on the important themes of the Millennium Pastoral Letter. He highlighted the need for us to

“get back to basics” in theology by presenting to our faithful and to our society the “the overarching vision of the divine economy as it has been outlined in our Orthodox tradition.” He said that we need to “look back to the sources of our Faith, but only to allow us to face forward again toward our future with a renewed sense of who we are as the Body of Christ.” He urged us to take up the Church’s missionary imperative “to unite the world into this baptismal faith, recapitulating it into the unity of Christ” while pointing to the “artificial jurisdictional boundaries in North America that hamper this mission.”

Bishop Seraphim of the Orthodox Church in America offered us pastoral and spiritual reflections on the practical application of our faith. In emphasizing the importance of the virtues of humility and simplicity, he pointed to the perceived gap between what we profess and what we actually do. He said that we must in particular direct our “work with the poor and underprivileged and homeless.” In emphasizing our own role as archpastors he reminded us that “we must be examples of forgiveness and reconciliation, and merciful dispensers of canonical medicines.”

One of the greatest challenges before us remains the imperative need for strengthening the unity of the Orthodox Church on the North American continent. The question is how to perfect the unity that is given us as “a gift from God.” [143] It is clear to all of us that “the future of our Church lies in our willingness to work together.” [145]

We affirm the value of the present structure of the Standing Conference as the preeminent vehicle for our cooperation and as a sign of unity that our Lord wills for our Holy Orthodox Church here in North America. We are encouraged by the fact that the SCOBA Hierarchs meet on a regular basis to strengthen our common witness. This vital work of SCOBA needs to be better communicated to all of the Hierarchs here and abroad. Based upon this blessed experience of gathering

here, we affirm the importance of all of the bishops meeting on a yearly basis. We also affirm the importance of the working commissions of SCOBA for our common ministry and encourage greater engagement by members of the hierarchy in the activity of the commissions. We also have a number of practical suggestions that seem to us within our power to accomplish and are necessary ways of strengthening and perfecting the unity we share.

The first is to strengthen and expand the current SCOBA commissions. Each of these either provides or has the potential to provide a rich opportunity to deepen our witness here. Some work very well, others need our genuine attention. For example, the International Orthodox Christian Charities (IOCC) and the Orthodox Christian Mission Center (OCMC), both organizations chartered by and responsible to SCOBA, provide a service to the Church not only here in North America but also worldwide. The various dialogues that the Orthodox Church here in North America has with fellow Christians, the Roman Catholics, the Lutherans and the Episcopalians have always come under the coordinated supervision of SCOBA. The Orthodox Christian Education Commission, one of the oldest SCOBA Commissions, has coordinated religious education, produced religious education materials, and provided a forum for all Orthodox Christian religious educators. The Orthodox Theological Society in America (OTSA) has provided a forum for our theologians to gather and reflect upon the important theological concerns confronting the Church today. The same is true of the Military Chaplaincy Commission that over the years has provided Military Chaplains for all Orthodox Christians serving our nation's armed forces. Each of these has worked extremely well and has broad representation and participation from the SCOBA jurisdictions. More recently, the commissions on Scouting, Campus and Youth work, and Contemporary Social and Moral Issues have been reorganized.

We clearly recognize that if this work is to be done fruitfully, we must commit ourselves to providing sufficient staff and resources.

As shepherds of the one flock of Christ in this land, we realize that we participate in the same ministry and that we face the same challenges as pastors and teachers of the faith. We affirm the need to bear public witness together on matters of spiritual and moral concern. We have the profound obligation to address the crying needs of the society in which we live. We must reach out. These are issues of vital concern to the future of humanity and the planet. There are people suffering from economic and political injustice. Many in our society are morally adrift. We cannot remain silent. The oneness of our voice will help to provide spiritual direction not only to our own faithful, but will also offer a witness to those around us of the truth of the Gospel.

We rejoice in the fact that in many places there are positive expressions of Orthodox cooperation and witness. We see in this the Body of Christ in action. Jurisdictional distinctions have, in these places, not inhibited the witness to the unity of the Church. In fact, in our discussions we have come to see this kind of common testimony to the Gospel of Christ grow and take ever more practical forms. We give thanks to God who has enabled us to join together not only for prayer but also for common ministry in service to the poor, in nurturing the young, and encouraging all in their life in Christ. We affirm this activity, and we commit ourselves to encouraging, strengthening and regularizing this sort of cooperation throughout the land.

We give thanks to our good and loving Lord for His having given us this time together. We also were strengthened by the prayers of our beloved clergy and faithful all across America. Many of them were generous benefactors for this event. We are also grateful to the Washington area parishes, and especially the Cathedral parishes of St. Sophia and St.

Nicholas for their hospitality.

As we closed our work here we gathered together for the Holy Eucharist. Each of us partook of the Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ. There can be no more perfect sign of our unity. Our experience of the Divine Liturgy renews us and reminds us that “every good and perfect gift is from above, from him who is the father of lights.”

We are deeply conscious of the fact that we are bearers of the Tradition. It is the Tradition of the Gospel of Christ which unites us to the Apostles themselves. This is for us both a profound burden and a source of joy, for we know that we are servants of God’s people. “The Church is not a museum and we are not Her curators. The Church is a living and breathing community, the Body of Christ.” [136]. In this land we are strengthened by the witness of countless saints in every place and every time who proclaim the Gospel of Christ in word and deed.

Glory to God who offers us this opportunity to witness to Him! Glory to Him who rose from the dead! Glory to Him who breathes life into all that is!

**CHRIST IS RISEN!**

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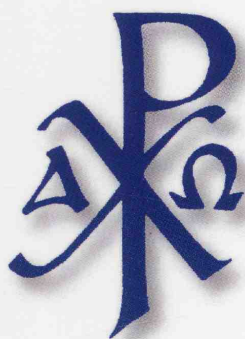
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## **Editorial**

### **FAITH SEEKING UNDERSTANDING AND PASTORAL GUIDANCE**

Had our publication of the Review not fallen behind schedule, this Fall-Winter, 2001 edition would have been published in the wake of the tragedy of September 11, 2001. As part of our collection of documents in this edition, therefore, we have included the Encyclical of the Standing Conference of Orthodox Bishop (SCOBA), published only a few weeks after the horrific event. Nearly three thousand persons lost their lives because of the terrorist attacks. Millions of others were affected by the loss. The tragedy was etched in the national psyche. The consequences of that day, and the other days of terrorist activity, continue to affect America and the whole world.

The SCOBA Encyclical is important for many reasons. It is a significant, pastoral recognition of the tragedy and its consequences for the entire American nation. The Encyclical was prepared and widely circulated at a time when the shock of the tragedy was immediate and pervasive. In these moments of national grief, fear and confusion, the Encyclical offered words of comfort and inspiration rooted in the Gospel.

While not diminishing the extent of the tragedy, the bishops reminded the faithful of the presence of the Risen Lord even in times of loss, pain and despair. "Putting our trust in the God of love and hope and reconciliation," the bishops said, "we receive comfort in knowing that the Risen Christ has overcome death and that the Evil One does not have

the final word. God has the final word, and He is always with us." Undoubtedly, this was an affirmation which was repeated time and again by priests, teachers and parents in the following days, weeks and years.

The bishops also recognize the many examples of love, care and self-sacrifice which also accompanied the tragedy. God has in fact blessed us with free will. Some chose to exercise their freedom for the sake of evil and destruction. Others chose freely to give of themselves in love for the sake of the other. Good and loving people performed countless acts of sacrificial love on that day and those following it. They comforted the grieving, they healed, they prayed, they shared, they blessed, they inspired and they honored the dead. Many gave their own lives in an attempt to save others. These images too are etched in the psyche of the nation. "Their sacrifice," the bishops say, "reminds us of the words of our Lord: 'No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends'" (John 15:13).

The Bishops' Encyclical also looks to the future. Indeed, the bishops affirm an obligation to examine the critical issues facing our country. They say: "We are acutely mindful that we are mandated by our theological vision, our spiritual convictions and our pastoral duties to look deeply into the meaning of the challenges faced by our government and our political leaders and representatives." Speaking boldly, with a sense of obligation to this nation, the bishops also say: "We believe that the United States and the international community must seek the moral and political wisdom to build a world in which justice and tolerance and peace are established. All the disenfranchised and impoverished people of the world must have the same opportunities we have for a good and productive life... To work for justice, tolerance and peace will give testimony to the overcoming of fear. For our part, the response to all fear must be our continued growth in the love of God and one another."

We now know that the September 11 attacks led to a war on terrorists in Afghanistan and a preemptive war against Iraq based upon unsubstantiated claims that it possessed weapons of mass destruction. With little support from other nations, the regime in Iraq was toppled. However, despite the bravery of men and women in the military, it has been more difficult to restore order and to keep the peace there. The war and its aftermath have contributed to divisions in our own country.

Moreover, the war has also detracted attention from critical issues facing the country and the world. With little attention from the administration or the media, the conflict between Israelis and Palestinians has intensified. The war in Sudan has become more vicious. Here at home, little attention has been paid to the health care crisis, to education, to the degradation of the environment, and to the growing gap between the wealthy and the poor. These are questions of values too!

September 11 and its consequences provide the background for many questions about life in this country today, profoundly theological questions which are raised not simply in formal academic settings. The questions are raised in families and in parishes as well as in elementary and high schools. Some questions appear at first to be solely political in nature. These relate to the direction of the United States, its relationship with the community of nations and its role in world affairs.

Other questions may appear at first to be of a psychological, sociological, or legal nature. These relate to the sexual abuse of the young by persons in authority, to the increase of addictions, to discrimination, to medical technology, to the dark side of the Internet, to corporate greed and corruption, as well as to the scandalous behavior of prominent persons. Some questions point to increasing fragmentation and polarization among groups of people. Other questions relate to the apparent ongoing devaluation of marriage and family life. Do these questions also not have a theological dimension?

There are also more obvious theological questions. They relate to the presence and activity of a good God who permits violence. They relate to the dignity and value of the human person. They relate to the significance of other world religions. They relate to the influence of extreme perspectives of Evangelical Protestantism on the public policies of some political leaders. They relate to the role of religion, and specifically Orthodox Christianity, in this pluralistic society.

Is the Orthodox Church in the United States willing to address these theological questions, which are raised in homes and shops, in schools and in the media?

Let us remember that the greatest teachers of the Church, whom we honor as Fathers and Mothers, did not simply address the complex questions related to the Holy Trinity in their times. But, rooted in their experience of the philanthropic God and theocentric person, they addressed issues of wealth and poverty, of the poor and marginalized, of injustice and peace, and of divisions among Christians. They applied the Gospel of Christ to the issues of their day.

Remember St. Basil's city of love and compassion, the *Basileias*, where care was offered to all, both Christian and pagan alike! Remember the unselfish charity of St. Olympia the Deacon and St. John the Almsgiver! Remember St. Gregory the Theologian who sought Christian reconciliation, and advocated for the poor, the sick and the dispossessed. Remember St. Ambrose who challenged the Emperor! Remember St. John Chrysostom who criticized government corruption and the greed of the wealthy. Remember St. Elizabeth the New Martyr who fed the hungry and cared for orphans. Remember St. Herman of Alaska who defended human rights and taught farming techniques to the poor.

They were not sectarians concerned with their own well-being. They knew that the light of the Christian faith could not be hidden under the table! They not only honored God



in the church. They also honored God in the world through their respect for persons, even the least among them, and through their concern for the well-being of the society. Have we neglected to hear their words or to read those pages of their stories?

Some Orthodox leaders today are frequently quick to seek for the Church the recognition of those in government, business and education. Yet, for those of us in positions of leadership, the nagging questions remains. Are we providing the Orthodox faithful, and all people of goodwill, with sensitive and pastoral guidance in their struggle with real life issues today? Are we contributing to the healing, well-being and advancement of this society, where God has placed us as his servants?

The SCOBA Encyclical for September 11 and the earlier Pastoral Letter on the Millennium indicate that the Orthodox bishops together have the ability to address in a pastoral manner the issues facing both the church and the society. Their common action strengthened their pastoral authority and their message. Their united voice needs to be encouraged!

Likewise, a number of priests and theologians have also heard the questions of our day and have begun to respond to them with a pastoral sensitivity free from sectarianism and triumphalism. Their voice needs to be encouraged.

Thomas FitzGerald





## REVIEWS





## DOCUMENTS





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## **The Origin and Development of the Ecclesiastical Autocephaly of Georgia**

MICHAEL TARCHNIŠVILI\*

Translation by Patrick Viscuso

### **I.**

The initial legal position of the Georgian church, as in the case of many others, is shrouded in darkness. We only know that during the time of Constantine the Great, when Georgia converted to Christianity, she received her first hierarchy at Ostrom.<sup>1</sup> According to Gelasios of Caesarea (367-395) or Gelasios of Kyzikos (around 475),<sup>2</sup> there was a Bishop Alexander of Constantinople who sent the first shepherd to the Georgians.<sup>3</sup> Whether this information is based on historical grounds or legend, the fact is intended to illustrate that at the time Alexander (314-337) occupied the episcopal see of Byzantium, with nothing more established with certainty. Nevertheless, further participation of the church on the Bosphorus in the canonical formation of the Georgian church is not documented.

\* Michael Tarchnišvili (d. 1958), a Roman Catholic priest, was considered an authority on the Georgian church and literature. The article, "Die Entstehung und Entwicklung der kirchlichen Autokephalie Georgiens," presented here for the first time in English translation, continues to be cited in studies dealing with autocephaly and was first published in *Kyrios; Vierteljahresschrift für Kirchen- und Geistesgeschichte Osteuropas* 5 (1940-41): 177-193, and then reprinted in *Le Muséon*, 73 (1960): 107-126. We express our gratitude to *Le Muséon* for permission to publish this translation. The author's original transliterations of Georgian names are retained where possible.

Regarding the initial relationship of the church of Georgia to the great metropolis of Antioch, here the facts are still not well established. On the strength of the ancient customary rights, which were validated by the First (canon 6) and Second (canon 2) Ecumenical Councils, the entire East was from the beginning brought under at least the nominal direction of the Antiochian church. Consequently, it would only follow that the Georgian church belonged to the Antiochian sphere of influence and would be hierarchically dependent on her; indeed even its first missionaries had come from there. Defenders of this viewpoint are in the first place the Antiochians themselves. The melkite monk Nikon made the statement in the eleventh century that the Antiochian patriarch Eustathios (325-331) had visited the Georgians in their land by order of Constantine, baptized them, gave them a catholicos, and placed the latter under the patriarchal see of Antioch.<sup>4</sup> Michael the Syrian (1166-1199), the Jacobite patriarch of this metropolis, thought essentially the same.<sup>5</sup> Nevertheless, these accounts, which appear so late, can make no particular claim to reliability.

A letter of the patriarch John of Antioch (d. 648) to the great metropolitan Maruta of Tagrit (d. 649) appears more credible. He reports there among other things: "Because previously the see of the catholicos of Persia and that of the catholicos of Armenia, Gurzan and Aran had been submitted to the see of Antioch until the murder of the catholicos Babai" (d. circa. 484).<sup>6</sup> On closer examination, one indeed cannot refrain from admitting that this text scarcely also goes beyond what we already know of the "customary rights" of the Antiochian church. He only states the fact that the East at that time was placed under the see of Antioch by right. Whether this right was also actually exercised, this account does not elucidate; a glance into the history of this local church will now lead us to the belief that it never has been given these rights in reality. As is generally known, since the

days of its foundation the Armenian church was subordinate to the metropolitan of Caesarea, from whom it completely disassociated itself around the end of the fourth century in order to develop independence. The Persian church likewise was only in name submitted to the Antiochian; around 423-424 it ascribed to itself in fact absolute autonomy and abrogated the right of appeal to the see of Antioch.<sup>7</sup> Since both of these churches were free from the jurisdiction of the see of the Antiochian metropolis, a dependence of Georgia on the same see can scarcely be imagined, especially when such a legal position of the Iberian church is not supported through a single contemporary foundational source.

We have to keep perhaps the following in mind regarding the hierarchical development of the Georgian church; the first bishop who no doubt came from Byzantium after the "conversion of Georgia" was named John. The priest Iakovos who came with him succeeded the latter to the episcopal see of Mzchetha. We do not know where he received episcopal consecration. Since the establishment of a native hierarchy in so short a time was not possible and the still humble and unassuming city on the Bosphorus was far off, the Georgians were compelled to petition an archshepherd of a neighboring Christian people, i.e., of the Armenians or Syrians. In fact, we see as a third bishop of Mzchetha, Job, a deacon of the Armenian archbishop Nerses the Great (circa 362-373).<sup>8</sup> That Nerses himself had consecrated his deacon to the episcopacy can be accepted without difficulty, especially since the relations between both churches were generally friendly and, on the other hand, the consecration in itself was able to establish no legal title.<sup>9</sup> Furthermore, the thought is obvious that other Armenian missionaries were found accompanying Job. Their work in Georgia may have contributed much later to their perceiving in Gregory the Parthian a teacher of the Georgians.

Nevertheless, the Georgians seem soon thereafter to be

under the influence of a yet stronger neighboring Church, i.e., most probably the Syro-Persian. This is sufficiently evident from the acts of a Syro-Persian Synod, which was held in the year 419 under the catholicos Mar Jahballaha in Seleucia. The “bishop of Gurzan,” i.e., Georgia, took part in this synod.<sup>10</sup> Moreover, what is most noticeable is the language of the synodal acts, according to which Jahballaha is catholicos of all the other bishops there. He is addressed “in the entire empire of Yazdegerd” as “head of the bishops of the East”<sup>11</sup> who owe him obedience. In a word, the bishops present at the synod consider all of themselves as subordinates of Mar Jahballaha. In my opinion, this statement does not permit any other conclusion than that at the beginning of the fifth century the Georgian church at the very least actually constituted part of the Syro-Persian catholicate and possibly was also canonically dependent on the latter. Because also politically at that time, Georgia belonged to the Persian Empire. The church of Georgia, left to its own resources during the time of the Arian and Nestorian controversies, went back and forth between both neighboring churches, until King Vachtang (502) put an end to this unnatural state of affairs through the establishment of the catholicate.

## II.

It is very difficult to extricate the reasons leading to the creation of the catholicate from such scanty fluid sources, which besides were also heavily reworked in the sense of later allegedly “pure unchanged Orthodoxy,” because the Georgian chronicles such as *The Conversion of Georgia* and *The Life of Georgia* are rather restrained on this question. However, those suggestions that they made which cloud understanding and at first sight appear so strange, nevertheless permit us to lift the mysterious veil under which they seek to hide the true beginnings of the church autocephaly of Georgia.

The church had barely overcome Arianism, and had not by any means overcome Nestorianism, when she saw posed before her a new teaching – Monophysitism. Especially the Syrian East, their actual homeland, had opened the door for the teaching of Nestorios and Eutyches. A fierce struggle soon developed there between the adherents of the conflicting opinions, which around the end of the fifth century led to the establishment of a Nestorian church in Persia and a Monophysite in Antioch.

It is obvious that these dogmatic struggles could not fail to have serious consequences for Georgia, in whose proximity they raged. We even know from dependable sources that from 498 a Georgian bishop was also under the jurisdiction of the Nestorian catholicos of Syro-Persia.<sup>12</sup> In the same century, even the archbishops of Mzchetha do not appear to remain entirely unaffected by heresy. That results from the following observation: of the thirteen archbishops who headed the Georgian church up to the formation of the catholicate,<sup>13</sup> *The Conversion of Georgia* curiously lists only nine; it does not know the other four apparently. *The Life of Georgia*<sup>14</sup> is somewhat more communicative and adds three to the nine names. The name of the thirteenth bishop is ignored by both. By luck, he is known from the *Martyrium* of St. Šušanik; he is called Samuel.<sup>15</sup> The complete list of the thirteen archbishops of Georgia is accordingly in roughly this order:

1. Iona under King Mirian
2. Jacob under Bakur
3. Job under Trdat and Varasbakur (around 368)
4. Elia under Bakur, the son of Trdat
5. Simeon under Farsman (around 395-404)
6. Iona |
7. Grigol | under King Arčil (around 437)
8. Basil |
9. Mobidan |

## 10. Glonakar or Bolnokar under Mirdat

11. Iovel |

12. Samuel | under Vachtang

13. Michael |

The most important thing now follows: the *LG* has retained a remark which completely illuminates the *credo* of these thirteen archbishops for us. It states there, "From King Mirian to Vachtang, eight bishops died in accordance with the order of the truth, the remaining ones however as disturbers of the order."<sup>16</sup> It is clear from this that five heretics are apportioned among the thirteen archshepherds, thus almost half the total number of archbishops. This may serve as proof of the fact that the young church of Georgia at that time had to fend for itself and, alternating between the Armenian and Syro-Persian churches, completely managed without more active and prudent direction on the part of the "Mother Church."

In response to the additional question concerning the identity of these five heterodox bishops, it can be accepted with all probability that they are to be found right among the four hierarchs not mentioned by the *CG*. These were: Grigol, Basil, Mobidan and Samuel. The fifth is certainly not to be determined with more certainty. He will be probably the one next to last. Furthermore it is not evident from the sources which *credo* this archbishop himself professed. It is only stated of Mobidan, he was a "godless magician," thus possibly a secret Zoroastrian hierarch<sup>17</sup> or former Manichaeon.<sup>18</sup> Whether the other four were Arian or Nestorian, or even Monophysite – which applies naturally only to the two latter ones, Samuel and the unknown – we do not know, unfortunately. This is inconsequential for our topic. It is sufficient to have hereby furnished to us only the proof that the ancient Georgian church strongly participated in the religious struggles of that time. The fact that this participation continued to remain active will be shown now in the following.



According to the partially fictional life of King Vachtang, which is contained in the *LG*, the change of hierarchical affairs took place as follows in Georgia: Vachtang invades Asia Minor; he seizes thereby even the episcopal city of Nazianzus. Among the captured prisoners he found a certain Peter, “one of the students of Gregory the Theologian...a priest at the grave of the great teacher,” at Nazianzus, and a monk by the name of Samuel. Peter now undertakes to win over Vachtang to the side of the emperor of Byzantium. This succeeds by means of a dream in which Saint Nino, Gregory Nazianzen and Constantine appear to the king. The emperor promises the hand of his daughter and concludes a friendship alliance with him; but St. Gregory recommends Peter to him as catholicos of Georgia. Vachtang marches from Greece to Persia. In the eighth year of his stay there, he returns home and sends envoys to Byzantium. These have orders to bring the future wife of the king, the catholicos Peter and the bishop Samuel to Georgia. When this reaches the ears of Archbishop Michael, he revolts against the king and is impelled to say, “You have deserted Christ and worship the fire.” Vachtang protests against such an accusation; at the same time, he informs him that he has sent messengers to Byzantium in order to obtain a catholicos and more bishops from there. In my opinion, the archbishop is able to prevent the arrival of the new hierarchs through trouble and strife. Michael imposes “church excommunication on the king and his troops.” In spite of this provocation, the king thinks, “If I am also innocent, then I shall after all remain humble.” He calls on him and wishes to give him the customary kissing of the feet. In the process the archbishop repels him so violently with his feet that he knocks out a tooth. The consequence of this act is that the king reproaches him for his envy and jealousy against the new superior (catholicos) and brands him as a money-craving Judas.<sup>19</sup>

The relevant accounts of other sources differ in many

important points from that of the *LG*. The *CG* speaks without explanation of the wounding of the king. The manuscript of Čeliš (14th century) is somewhat more detailed and open: “He (Michael) for some reason shoved his foot against the mouth of the king. The king became violently angry, his face discolored, evil thoughts seized him, and he was on the point of exterminating Christianity.”<sup>20</sup> However soon he calms down and sends Michael to the patriarch of Constantinople for punishment. At the same time, he requests from him a catholicos and twelve bishops. The Peter mentioned above is to be ordained catholicos. Samuel and eleven others, whose selection he leaves to the patriarch, are to be ordained bishops. The patriarch of Constantinople displays such selflessness that he leaves the whole affair to the patriarch of Antioch, because “the Kartli (the Georgians at that time), the East and the North” are dependent canonically on him.<sup>21</sup> From the contradictory accounts, we want to select out only certain important points, in order to show by them that in Georgia other causes underlay the emergence of the catholicate.

The fact that the excommunication of the king and his men really took place and can be no invention of the author is beyond all doubt. However, if one asks the reason for such an action, then one stands before a mystery. The *LG* attributes this to the alleged apostasy of the king. However, Michael could have been very easily convinced of the groundlessness of this accusation, if he had so desired. This happened also, as the king prostrated himself before him, in order to prove his homage to him. How now is the kick to be explained after this act of humility? Perhaps this is connected with the creation of the catholicate? One would also like to ask here, how does it occur that not Michael, but another is selected for this new dignity? Furthermore how is the attitude of the other sources to be explained, which either ignore the excommunication or the cause of the latter with silence? Furthermore, how can the author make us believers that the

bishop of Byzantium, who let himself be assigned just at that time by the Ecumenical Councils of Constantinople (381) and Chalcedon (451) to the first place immediately after old Rome and to rule over the dioceses of Pontus, Asia and Thrace, refers the representatives of the Georgian church to the patriarch of Antioch out of unparalleled magnanimity?

Since now in this case no reliability can be granted to the *LG*, then the true reasons for the discord that developed between Vachtang and the archbishop Michael are to found elsewhere, in the two partners themselves and in their religious belief. We consider first the personality of Michael and his faith: "If we only knew who Michael was and what was his faith, we would also be capable of knowing on what basis the controversy was inflamed."<sup>22</sup>

The Georgian tradition regards Michael always as the incessant advocate of true orthodoxy in the sense of the Council of Chalcedon and as the annihilator of all heresies in Georgia. In order to be able to fight the Persian fire cult and different heretical teachings effectively, the pious king Sagducht had him expressly come "from Greece" and appointed him as archbishop. Michael shows himself to be amply equal to his tasks. The Georgian church admires him therefore as "blessed Michael." In a novel he even appears as a hero, who thrashes and stones the "Heretic Peter" (Fuller!). It was he also who let the writings of the "godless magician" Mobidan burn. Consequently the fact can be described as certain that the king who is excommunicated by such a bishop does not share this faith. The later expulsion of Michael, his replacement by another and the unique appointment of twelve new bishops strengthen us in this opinion.<sup>23</sup> All this points to the fact that the king intended the stabilization of his own party and a reorganization of the Georgian church by this radical and unusual measure. In order to carry out and give the appearance of the lawfulness to his project, Vachtang had to turn to him from whom he was allowed to expect more

cooperation, to the patriarch of Antioch, to whom the Georgian church was subject at least theoretically. This leads us to the question about the time of the catholicate's establishment. It can be defined rather exactly. At the common synod of the Georgian, Albanian and Armenian churches held in 506 at Dvin in Armenia, the head of the Georgian church is called catholicos. The *Martyrium* of St. Šušānik offers the second reference point for us. Directly before her death, which took place approximately around 472,<sup>24</sup> she received the visit of the "head of the bishops, Samuel."<sup>25</sup> Furthermore it is otherwise certain that Vachtang in 484 was indignant against his Persian overlord and lost crown and life in this lengthy war around 502.<sup>26</sup> Thus the creation of the catholicate is to be set between 472 and 484.

Around this time a Georgian appeared in Syria and Palestine, whose name was known far and wide; Peter the Iberian (d. 488). He had joined the Monophysite party, was appointed as the bishop of Maiuma, and had taken over their religious guidance. In order to alleviate the distresses of their supporters and meet their religious needs, he had created monasteries and hospices there, among which was one in Jerusalem called "that of the Iberian."<sup>27</sup> From this naming, it is to be concluded that Peter maintained rather active relations with his homeland and gave a warm reception to Georgian monks and pilgrims, of which at that time there were many.<sup>28</sup> It is self-evident that the inmates and guests of these monasteries and lodgings were for the most part Monophysites and after their return to Georgia supported their new faith. Peter was a good acquaintance of the like-minded patriarch Peter the Fuller of Antioch, who held the episcopal chair of this city three times (468-471, 475-477, 485-488).<sup>29</sup> Therefore, it is not out of the question that Vachtang contacted this Patriarch through Georgian Monophysites. Peter the Fuller would certainly not have hesitated to provide Georgia with a Monophysite hierarchy.

This supposition of the Monophysite origin of the Georgian catholicate rises to certainty, if we consider the following historically indisputable fact. The Synod of Dvin (506) mentioned above declared itself in favor of Monophysite-colored teachings and adopted, it seems, the *Henotikon* of the emperor Zeno.<sup>30</sup> Twenty four Georgian bishops, with the catholicos Gabriel at their head, sealed the decisions of this council with their own signatures.<sup>31</sup>

The development of the Georgian church was therefore logically consistent. In approximately thirty years after their reorganization by Vachtang, the number of the Monophysite-disposed bishops had doubled itself. However, the whole Georgian church had not succumbed to the new faith. Of the thirty three bishops existing at that time, nine of them had refused their agreement to the articles of the synod, which are unknown to us.<sup>32</sup> It was reserved for these and their successors around the turn of the seventh century to carry out the return to the Orthodoxy.<sup>33</sup>

For this development of independence of the Georgian hierarchy political considerations could also have been decisive. Vachtang belongs to the popular kings of Georgia. His poetically embellished heroic acts testify to it. He was in actions an energetic and self-confident prince, who wanted to release his country religiously and politically from outside guardianship. After the establishment of the catholicate he even succeeded in winning over the Armenians, who thought highly of him, against Persian outside rule.<sup>34</sup> Although his political plan failed, nevertheless the hierarchical institution remained in full strength.

Concerning the occupants of the catholicate, they were, one may conclude from the sources, up to Farsman (542-557) pure Syrians or Greeks. Not until under this king would Saba be the first Georgian raised to the chair of the catholicos. At that time, the catholicate appears to have become hereditary in two Georgian aristocratic families of Mzchetha. However,

this deplorable state of affairs was not of long duration.<sup>35</sup>

### III.

Now the question arises: under what conditions did the new hierarchy come about? In the absence of other direct sources, the following account of the later organization of the catholicate may be used. The Georgian monk Ephraim the Minor<sup>36</sup> and the melkite Nikon,<sup>37</sup> both from that eleventh century, communicate to us the following news, which they, as they assure us, have extracted from old chronicles. Under Emperor Constantine Kopronymos (741-775), two Georgian monks came to the patriarch Theophylaktos of Antioch (circa 744-751). They complained about the fact that the Georgians had not had any catholicos, "since the blessed martyr Anastasios (Patriarch of Antioch, d. 610) because of travel dangers and from fear of the Arabs." On account of this presentation, the patriarch issued a synodal decree, after which he left the future consecration of the catholicos to the Georgian bishops, but made obligatory for them the mention of the Antiochian patriarchs in the liturgy and an annual payment of 1,000 Drachma.<sup>38</sup> Furthermore, the patriarch reserved for himself the right to send an exarch to Georgia, in the event of the arising of heresies and schisms. From this evidence, whose authenticity no convincing reason exists to doubt, it is absolutely clear that from the seventh up to the middle of the eighth centuries Georgia's contact with Antioch was interrupted. This circumstance implies that Georgia did not possess a church leader during this time, because its catholicos had to receive his ordination in Antioch. However, this last requirement can be explained only from the original structure of the catholicate. It was abolished only in the eighth century and thus the full and final autocephaly of the Georgian church was declared. We must firmly hold this final conclusion. From the life of Saint

Gregory of Khandzta (d. 861) we know that the catholicos Arsen of Mzchetha (855-882) in the ninth century was selected by the Georgian people and clergy, and consecrated by Georgian bishops, without any intervention by a foreign church authority.<sup>39</sup> Thus, with the decision of the patriarch Theophylaktos, the development of the Georgian hierarchy was final.

Nevertheless, the Georgian church was still missing something, which possesses great importance in the eyes of Easterners; the consecration of the holy *myron* in the country itself. The credit for having gained this last honor for Georgia belongs to Bishop Ephraim of Azkveri. G. Merčuli writes concerning this, "However, Ephraim the Great (9th century) was very good for our country. In former times the catholicoses of the East obtained *myron* from Jerusalem. However, Ephraim arranged in Christ that the consecration of the *myron* take place in Kartli (Georgia) in accordance with the decision and favorable approval of the Patriarch of Jerusalem."<sup>40</sup> This took place under Patriarch Sergios of Jerusalem (843-859), when two Iberian monks, Michael and Arsen, founders of a Georgian monastery on Mount Olympus in Asia Minor, came to the holy city and obtained this right for their church from the synod there, in agreement with the Patriarch of Antioch.<sup>41</sup>

Now the question arises: if the Georgian church depended hierarchically on Antioch, for what reason then did it obtain the *myron* from Jerusalem and not from Antioch? To this apparently so delicate a question, it is to be answered simply that the consecration of *myron* has nothing to do with hierarchical position. The consecration of *myron* was a privilege of bishops in the ancient church. Many synods, including the Carthaginian (390, canon 3, and 397, canon 36), whose canons found recognition and acceptance in the Eastern church, have pointedly repeated this right. Each bishop was entitled to perform the consecration of the chrism

personally. Only later this right passed to the patriarchs, without in this way casting doubt on the ancient practice. However, the circumstances under which the chrism was prepared became ever more complicated – the number of fragrant herbs added to the holy oil often reached fifty-three – and its consecration became no less solemn. These circumstances may have pressed the Georgians during the time of Arab rule to obtain chrism from abroad. From this the so-called customary law will then have been formed. At the same time, it will probably be surprising to no one that the Georgians focused their eyes not on Antioch, but toward Jerusalem. The relationship of Georgia to Antioch was not long-lasting. The connection, established at the end of the fifth century, began to flag already in 610, coming to a complete end in the eighth century. It is different with Jerusalem. The Georgians always felt drawn to this city. She constituted the goal of their pilgrimages and probably the birthplace of their monastic life. She was for the Iberian the “mother of all churches,”<sup>42</sup> from whose hand they willingly received their liturgical and religious traditions. Her name was readily transferred to similarly important cities; thus Constantinople was called not in the church-political sense of the Greeks “New Rome,” but “New Jerusalem.”<sup>43</sup> She was considered also the stronghold and source of the true faith, and the Georgians were convinced that Christianity was brought to them from the holy city. According to legend, St. Nino the Apostle of Georgia received her apostolic commission in Jerusalem,<sup>44</sup> while her father was a Roman commander. All this naturally did not have the slightest thing to do with canonical dependence. It was rooted only in the faith and in the love for the birthplace of Christ. The same charm also kept many other churches entranced, e.g. the Armenian, of which however one knows well that it was dependent hierarchically on Caesarea not on Jerusalem. Also the fact that the right of consecrating *myron* was granted to



the Georgians with the agreement of Antioch supports our thesis. Otherwise such interference in foreign affairs would be perfectly incomprehensible.

Just a word concerning the account of the Orthodox patriarch Balsamon of Antioch (d. 1195) regarding the Iberian church. After enumerating the five patriarchates of Rome, Alexandria, Antioch, Jerusalem and Constantinople, he also mentions the three autocephalous churches of Bulgaria, Cyprus and Iberia. Bulgaria was made independent by Justinian, Cyprus by the General Council of Ephesus. Concerning the Georgian church, he observes, "...it is said that at the time of the most holy patriarch Lord Peter ... a synodal decision was taken by Antioch, which made the church of Iberia free and autocephalous."<sup>45</sup>

What is to be thought now of this reference? Who is meant by the "most holy patriarch Peter" – the Monophysite-minded Peter II the Fuller, or the Orthodox Peter III (1052-1057)?<sup>46</sup> The context, in which the Iberian church is mentioned with the five great metropolises and the two churches that became autonomous in fifth and sixth century, seems to suggest that the author had thereby Peter the Fuller in mind. This would be then a shining confirmation of the Georgian sources. The epithet "most holy patriarch," with whom the Monophysite Peter is identified, would hardly stand in the way of this view, particularly since such titles of honor, which incidentally sank down to insignificance, apply more to the office than to its holder. One must not also overlook the fact that Peter the Fuller, at first hunted by the Orthodox, finally nevertheless was left alone. However, most scholars are inclined to see Peter III in this patriarch.<sup>47</sup> In this case, either there never was such a synodal decision – the statement of Balsamon himself, which begins with the uncertain "it is said" suggests this – or it is identical with the discussion held in synodal form, which St. George of Mount Athos led in 1056 or 1057 with the Patriarch of Antioch concerning the autocephaly of

the Georgian church.<sup>48</sup> A separate synodal decision would certainly have been perfectly pointless and senseless in the eleventh century. The Georgian church was by at least the ninth century completely free and autocephalous. We know this from George Merčuli who was mentioned above, whose reliability remains outside all doubt. Furthermore, if this separate decision had actually taken place, then we would have the impossibility that St. George, a basic source on all important events not just of his time and place, had ignored this decision in his own advocacy of Georgian church independence. For this reason, we know, without doing violence to the text, that Balsamon's reference is one and the same with the aforementioned discussion on Antioch. With the notorious incompleteness of the patriarchal catalogue, as well as the uncertainty of the sequence and the reigns of the patriarchs at that time, this is very easily possible.<sup>49</sup> Also the *Vita* of St. George places before us no serious difficulties; Balsamon speaks of Peter, the *Vita* published by P. Peeters, however, of Theodosios.<sup>50</sup> However, the manuscript used by Sabinin does not contain a name here.<sup>51</sup> The reading might thus not be completely perfect. Perhaps Balsamon himself handed down the name of the patriarch incorrectly, since he did not know it from a reliable source, but from hearsay. At any rate, after all that was already stated above, we do not at all think that an acknowledgment of the autocephaly of the Georgian church took place only in the eleventh century. It was already a completed fact for a long time before this.

The autocephaly of the Georgian church, established fundamentally in the fifth century and fully realized in the eighth century, experienced no further substantial changes through the centuries. She could soon go on to organizing and internally strengthening herself. Iberia's political-cultural display of power then came in very useful for her. Based in and for Eastern Georgia, from the eighth to the ninth century she extended her authority also over the

Eastern areas of Georgia to the Black Sea. This increase in possession and jurisdiction contributed much to the fact that its reputation rose and was strengthened externally. From now on, in relation to other churches she could behave as in former times much more independently and with more decisiveness. Therefore, she kept herself completely apart from the icon controversy of Byzantium and even gave refuge to the persecuted Iconodules. This constant devotion to pure Orthodoxy was so widely reputed that even an ecclesiastical leader of the Crimean Goths, whose name was John, at the end of the ninth century traveled to Mzchetha, so that his ordination to the episcopacy might take place there, "because in Constantinople the heresy of iconoclasm held sway."<sup>52</sup>

The Georgian church remained indifferent likewise to the theological disputes of the Middle Ages, which ultimately led to the final break between Eastern and Western church. The separation of the Georgians from the Roman See took place only later and gradually. The first indications of it date from the year 1240.<sup>53</sup> At the same time the union work attempted by Latin missionaries led to no lasting results, so that the mass of the Georgian people have remained separated from Rome up to our days. Concerning the number of Catholics in Georgia, there were about 40,000 adherents of the Roman church there up to the Great War, of which most belonged to Latin rite.

The church of Georgia saw itself as remaining unaffected through the course of many centuries up to the beginning of the nineteenth century, before events took place that would suddenly destroy their independence. The secular struggles with the Turks and Persians had bled the country white. Therefore its last king, Herakleios II (d. 1798), sought assistance from foreign rulers. When he did not find it in the West, he concluded a friendship treaty in 1783 with the empress Catherine II. While maintaining the internal

independence of the country and retention of the native ruling dynasty, this treaty united Georgia politically with Russia. However, it left the church and her catholicos full independence.<sup>54</sup> Nevertheless, after the death of the last king (1800) Russia declared the annexation of Georgia in 1801 (all solemn treaties to the contrary), made it a Russian province and destroyed thereby at the same time also the independence of the church. The church was subordinated to the Russian Synod. The last catholicos, Antonios II, was forced to resign and in the year 1811 exiled to Russia. An exarch stepped into his place, who had to administer the Georgian church in the name of the Holy Synod. Although the first holder of this new dignity was a Georgian, nevertheless from 1817 onwards only Russian bishops were appointed as exarchs of Georgia,<sup>55</sup> “whose entire political effort was only one long effort to russify the Georgian church.”<sup>56</sup> This uncanonical condition lasted up to the Great War, during which the revolution destroyed the old empire and brought the nations of Russia liberty and independence. On 12 March 1917 the Georgian church proclaimed its independence and selected Bishop Kyrion as the “catholicos-patriarch of all Georgia.”<sup>57</sup> Church life was newly organized and new statutes prepared by the local synod in Tiflis (1917) and in the monastery of Gelathi (1921).<sup>58</sup>

Since 1917 the Georgian church has been governed in accordance with their statutes in the following way. The head of the church is “the catholicos patriarch of all Georgia and archbishop of Tiflis and Mzchetha,” who governs with the high church patriarchal council. The catholicos and the patriarchal council, half of whose members are composed of religious and the other of laity, are selected by the general council. All diocesan bishops belong to the patriarchal council. Dioceses are administered by a diocesan council under the presidency of the ordinary. The diocesan council is selected by the diocesan assembly in the same way as

the patriarchal council. Eparchies are divided into districts = church municipalities. The head of such a municipality is a dean, who administers the district under episcopal supervision. During the district meeting, the next dean is selected, whose appointment depends however on the bishop. Each church municipality has a general council, which looks after church property. The monasteries are subordinate to the responsible bishop; only the women's monastery of Saint Nino at Bodbissi stands under the high church council (= patriarchal council). According to the statutes of the year 1921, the general council is to be called every three years.

Since 1917 the Georgian church has already had five catholicos patriarchs: Kyrion II (1917-1918), Leonid (1918-1921), Ambrosios (1921-1927), and Kalistrates since 1932.

Since 1921, Georgia has been part of the Soviet Union. The already very inaccurate information flows so meagerly that we are not able to obtain a faithful picture of the situation and the further development of the Georgian church and its hierarchy during recent years.

As a general summary, we can say the following. The establishment of the Georgian church proceeded from Byzantium. Soon left to its own devices, it entered into hierarchical relations with the Armenian and Syrian churches. In the fifth century the catholicate was created, which most likely was Monophysite and therefore of Antiochian origin. At the beginning of the seventh century, Iberia returned to Orthodoxy.<sup>59</sup> In the eighth century, the development of the autocephalous movement of the Iberian church was completely final. This independence, acquired in a canonical manner, was only at the beginning of the nineteenth century suppressed by Russia by force, in order exactly one hundred years later (1917) to be restored for the time being.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> See Rufinus, *Historia eccl.*, X, 11, Eusebius' *Werke*, II, 2, Leipzig 1903, pp. 973-976, edited by Th. Mommsen. Concerning the relationship of Rufinus to Gelasios of Caesarea, see P. Peeters, "Les débuts du christianisme en Géorgie d'après les sources hagiographiques," *Anal. Boll.* 50 (1932), pp. 30-33; Franz Diekamp, *Analecta patristica, Orientalia Christiana Analecta* 117 (1938), pp. 16 ff; Ant. Glas, "Die Kirchengeschichte des Gelasios von Kaisaria...", *Byzant. Archiv*, Heft 6.

<sup>2</sup> The church history of the former no longer exists in an independent form; but it is contained, at least partially, in that of the second.

<sup>3</sup> Gerh. Loeschke – Marg. Heinemann, *Gelasios' Kirchengeschichte*, Leipzig, 1918, p. 154.

<sup>4</sup> M. Tamarati, *L'Eglise géorgienne*, Rome 1910, p. 174.

<sup>5</sup> J.-B. Chabot, *Chronique de Michel le Syrien...*, 2, Paris 1901, p. 414.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 433 ff.

<sup>7</sup> Osk. Braun, *Das Buch der Synhados*, Stuttgart 1900, pp. 44-59; C. Karalevskii, "Antioche," Baudrillart, *Dict. d'hist. et de géogr. eccl.*, vol. 3, pp. 579-580; K. Lübeck, *Die altpersische Missionskirche*, Aachen 1919, pp. 46-55, 63-68.

<sup>8</sup> Ek. Takaišvili, *Opisanie rukopisej... Sbornik meterialov dlja opisaniia mēstnostej I plemen Kavkaza*, vol. 41, Tiflis 1910, pp. 53, 59-60 (georg.).

<sup>9</sup> Erw. Ter – Minassiantz, *Die aremnische Kirche in ihren Beziehungen zu den syrischen Kirchen*, Leipzig 1904, p. 7 (*Texte und Unters.* N.F. XI, p. 4).

<sup>10</sup> Osk. Braun, *op. cit.*, p. 35. Here, however, there is also mention of the bishops of "Armenians." The participation of the Armenian bishops in this synod is probably attributable to the strong influence of the Syro-Persian church on the Armenian. Perhaps here instead of Armenians we have to read Armenian. Concerning the situation of Armenia, see *Byzantinische Zeitschrift*, vol. 3, p. 371.

<sup>11</sup> Braun, *ibid.*, pp. 37-38, 41.

<sup>12</sup> Iv. Gvachišvili, *Karthveli Eris Istoria (History of the Georgian People)*, vol. 1, Tiflis 1928, pp. 285 ff.

<sup>13</sup> Takaišvili, *op. cit.*, pp. 41, 62.

<sup>14</sup> For the sake of the brevity we will represent *The Conversion of Georgia* with CG and *The Life of Georgia* with LG.

<sup>15</sup> P. Peeters, "Sainte Šoušanik, martyre en Arméno-Géorgie," *Anal. Boll.* 53 (1935), p. 38.

<sup>16</sup> M. Brosset, *Histoire de la Géorgie... Première Partie, Histoire an-*

cienne...réédition faite par N. Marr, Petrograd 1923, p. 121 (Georgian).

<sup>17</sup> K. Lübeck, *op. cit.*, p. 27; Ġavachišvili, *op. cit.*, pp. 282 ff.

<sup>18</sup> M. Brosset, *op. cit.*, p. 112. Mobidan was removed from his office by a synod and exiled.

<sup>19</sup> M. Brosset, *ibid.*, p. 144.

<sup>20</sup> E. Takaišvili, *op. cit.*, pp. 41, 62; Iv. Ġavachišvili, *op. cit.*, pp. 290-293.

<sup>21</sup> M. Brosset, *op. cit.*, p. 145; E. Takaišvili, *op. cit.*, p. 62.

<sup>22</sup> Iv. Ġavachišvili, *op. cit.*, p. 313.

<sup>23</sup> The wholesale removal and replacement of one party's bishops by the other was not rare during the time of the Monophysite controversy.

<sup>24</sup> Iv. Ġavachišvili, *op. cit.*, p. 320.

<sup>25</sup> P. Peeters, *op. cit.*, p. 38. In the case of Koriun ("Life and death of St. Mesrop" edited by S. Weber, "Armenische Kirchenväter," in *Bibl. Der Kirchenväter*, Munich, 1927, pp. 213-214) the reference is, however, to "a bishop from the land of Moses." However, in this regard it is probably not the Archbishop, but the royal bishop that is to be understood as the Samuel mentioned there. Incidentally, it has to be considered that the shorter *Vita Mesrops*, which is more genuine and reliable than this longer account (despite the contrary claims of some critics), does not know any such thing (see V. Langlois, *Collection des historiens anciens et modernes de l'Arménie*, vol. II, I, Paris 1869, p. 12).

<sup>26</sup> Iv. Ġavachišvili, *op. cit.*, pp. 266-267; Lazar von Pharb, *Geschichte Armeniens*; V. Langlois, *op. cit.*, pp. 325-337.

<sup>27</sup> R. Raabe, *Petrus der Iberer*, Leipzig 1895, p. 46 (German text).

<sup>28</sup> Iv. Ġavachišvili, *op. cit.*, p. 276.

<sup>29</sup> R. Raabe, *op. cit.*, p. 79.

<sup>30</sup> Ġavachišvili, *op. cit.*, pp. 287-290; Ter – Minassiantz, *op. cit.*, p. 31.

<sup>31</sup> Ġavachišvili, *op. cit.*, p. 278.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>33</sup> That Georgia after the Synod at Dvin did not completely give up the old faith, we see from the following; the Orthodox emperor Justinian (527-565) restored a monastery of the Iberian in Jerusalem (Prokopios, *De aedificiis* V, 9, 6, edit. J. Haury, Leipzig 1906, p. 169). According to the *Narratio de rebus Armeniae* from the seventh century (*P.G.* 132, 1245; Ġavachišvili, *op. cit.*, p. 321), the Georgians and the Albanians in 574 refused to insert the addition "you who were crucified for us" to the *Trisagion*; the sharp opponent of the Monophysites, Symeon the Younger (sixth century), repeatedly received Georgian monks and pilgrims, who streamed to him from Palestine and Georgia (K. Kekelidse, *Monumenta hagiographica georgica*, vol. I, Tiflis 1918, pp. 260 ff., pp. 283-286, p. 338); the *Martyrium* of St. Eustathius of Mzchetha (d. circa

545), written around 600, (Iv. Dschawachoff – Harnack, eds., *Sitzungsberichte der Kgl. preuß. Akademie der Wissenschaften*, Berlin 1901, pp. 875-902) shows no trace of religious differences in Georgia at that time. Therefore, the dogmatic clash between the catholicos Kyrion and the dignitaries of the Armenian church at the beginning of the seventh century was nothing other than the last visible act of one very long internal action; the return of the Georgian church to orthodoxy.

<sup>34</sup> Lazar von Pharb, *op. cit.*, pp. 325 ff.

<sup>35</sup> Takaišvili, *op. cit.*, pp. 62-63; Ġavachišvili, *op. cit.*, p. 275.

<sup>36</sup> Ġavachišvili, *ibid.*, p. 293.

<sup>37</sup> Tamarati, *op. cit.*, pp. 354.

<sup>38</sup> Patriarch John III (997-1022) seems to have left this sum to his colleagues of Jerusalem (see R. Janin, "Géorgie," *Dict. de théol. cath.*, vol. 6, p. 1253).

<sup>39</sup> Ger. Merčuli, *Zitie sv. Gregorija Chandziskago*, St. Petersburg 1911, p. 45 (georg. – russ.), edited by N. Marr.

<sup>40</sup> Merčuli, *ibid.*, p. 49.

<sup>41</sup> P. Peeters, "Histoires monastiques géorgiennes," *Anal. Boll.*, vol. 36-37 (1917-1919), p. 271, note 1.

<sup>42</sup> *Acta Sanctorum*, Nov. IV, 556; *Analecta Bollandiana* 46 (1928), pp. 390 ff.; see Theodore, *Church History*, V, 9, L. Parmentier, ed., Leipzig 1911, p. 294.

<sup>43</sup> Merčuli, *op. cit.*, p. 18.

<sup>44</sup> Supported by these and similar arguments, N. Marr maintained that Georgia was not from the outset under Antioch, but stood under Jerusalem. The inadequacy of his proof, like the invalidity of another opinion, according to which the Georgian church was initially subjected to the Armenian, Ġavachišvili (*op. cit.*, pp. 290-305) has thoroughly shown.

<sup>45</sup> P.G. 137, 320.

<sup>46</sup> C. Karalevskij, "Antioche," Baudrillart, *Dict. d'hist. et de geogr. Eccl.*, vol. 3, p. 699.

<sup>47</sup> H. Gelzer, "Ungedruckte und wenig bekannte Bistümerverzeichnisse der orientalischen Kirche," *Byzantinische Zeitschrift*, vol. 1 (1892), p. 276; Ġavachišvili, *op. cit.*, p. 319.

<sup>48</sup> P. Peeters, "Histoires monastiques géorgiennes," *op. cit.*, pp. 113-117.

<sup>49</sup> M. Gelzer, *op. cit.*, p. 277.

<sup>50</sup> P. Peeters, "Histoires monastiques géorgiennes," *op. cit.*, p. 113 ; see M. Brosset, *Histoire de la Géorgie*, St. Petersburg 1849, p. 339.

<sup>51</sup> P. Peeters, "Histoires monastiques géorgiennes," *op. cit.*, p. 113, note 1.

<sup>52</sup> P. Peeters, "Histoires monastiques géorgiennes," *op. cit.*, p. 117 ; "Vita s. Joannis episcopi Gotthiae," *Acta Sanctorum Junii* V, pp. 184-194, es-



pecially p. 190.

<sup>53</sup> K. Lübeck, *Georgien und die katholische Kirche*, Aachen 1918, pp. 31ff.; M. Tamarati, *op. cit.*, pp. 427-430.

<sup>54</sup> K. Lübeck, *op. cit.*, p. 88; M. Tamarati, *op. cit.*, pp. 89-91.

<sup>55</sup> See the document published by M. Tarchnišvili in 1919, "L'Eglise géorgienne et la Russie: Une lettre du catholicos Léonide au Patriarche Tykhon," *Echos d'orient* (1932), pp. 350-369, in which the elimination of autocephaly and the suffering of the Georgian church under Russian rule is described in detail. See also Tamarati, *op. cit.*, pp. 384-396.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 350-351; the text cited by me comes from that article of *Echos d'orient*.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 363.

<sup>58</sup> The eleventh century monastery of Gelathi is located in West Georgia in Kutais.

<sup>59</sup> M. Tarchnišvili, "Die Legende der heiligen Nino und die Geschichte des georgischen Nationalbewußtseins," *Byzantinische Zeitschrift*, 40 (1940), p. 69, where (note 3) briefly a position is taken completely against also K. Kekelidse, *Kanonikuri Tzkobileba Dsvl Sakarthveloši* = *Canonical Legislation in Ancient Georgia*, Moambe 10, Tiflis 1930, pp. 313-334.

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Fr. Constantine Terss

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Founded around 483, the site of St. Sabas' monastic community near Jerusalem was in the Judean desert and became a strong prototype for Eastern Orthodox monasticism as well as worship through its liturgical typikon. Cf. Papadopoulos 1921; Phokylides 1927; Chitty 1966; MacCoull 1991; Skythopolis 1991. The progression of this liturgical typikon from monastic Egypt, Palestine and Capadocia on to Constantinople for the neo-Sabaitic and Studite synthesis is the subject of much ongoing scholarly research. For excellent summaries of this progression in English and bibliographies, see Mateos 1967; Taft 1986, 1988, 1992; Thomas, Constantinides et al. 2000.

<sup>2</sup> Hosiou Saba, *Typikon syn Theo hagio periechon pasan ten diataxin tes ekklesiastikes akolouthias tou chronou holou* (En tais kleinais Benetiais: Typothēn para Ioanne Petro to Pinello analomasi tois autou, para de Theophylaktou Hieromonachou tou Tzanphourmarou, epimelos diorthothēn, 1643) folio hV. Cf. Saba Nanakou, *Ho hagios hieromartyr Serapheim* (ekdosis iv, Thessalonike, 1978) 107-8: "Rule regarding the service for Saturdays throughout the entire year," where the pilgrimage of the abbot of the Monastery of Kryare Brysis's in the year 1790 to Mount Athos is described and the story of how, after witnessing the use of the canon of the monastery in the mode of the week there, he returned to his own monastery and commissioned the creation of a set of canons in the eight modes for use on Saturday mornings in his own monastery is described.

<sup>3</sup> While various treatises by Matthaïos Kamariotes are known, see Kamariota and Reimarus 1721.

<sup>4</sup> These canons used today for the feast of the Transfiguration are found in the liturgical hymn book known as the Menaeon. The first canon in mode IV is by Kosmas Monachos and the second, in mode IV plagal, is by John of Damascus. For English translations of these canons, see Mary and Ware 1969.

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***Theoria kai Praxe tes Psaltikes Technes: Praktika A' Panelleniou synedriou psaltikes technes (Athena, 3-5 no-embriou 2000)***; Proceedings from the First Pan-Hellenic Conference, "Theoria and Praxis of the Psaltic Art" (Athens, 3-5 November 2000).

Institute of Byzantine Musicology of the Holy Synod of the Church of Greece. *Theoria kai Praxe tes Psaltikes Technes: Praktika A' Panelleniou synedriou psaltikes technes (Athena, 3-5 noembriou 2000) (Theoria and Praxis of the Psaltic Art: Proceedings of the First Pan-Hellenic Conference on the Psaltic Art; Athens, 3-5 November 2000)*. Athens: Institute of Byzantine Musicology of the Holy Synod of the Church of Greece, 2001. pp. 247. In Greek; notated music; photographic material; indexed. ISBN: 960-86798-3-4.

The historic meeting of the First Pan-Hellenic Conference on the Psaltic Art convened under the theme *Theoria kai Praxis* on 3-5 November 2002 in Athens. It was the result of the vision of the internationally-recognized Byzantine musicologist and Professor in the Department of Musicology of the National and Capodistrian University of Athens, Gregorios Th. Stathis. As director of the Institute of Byzantine Musicology of the Holy Synod of the Church of Greece, he presented his vision to the Institute's board, which approved it and organized the Conference with the blessings of His Beatitude Christodoulos, Archbishop of Athens and All Greece. The two items presently under review – the published Proceedings and a two-CD audio release of performed Byzantine and Post-Byzantine chant – are the first fruits of a new initiative recently undertaken by the Institute of Byzantine Musicology and comprise the newest chapter in the thriving traditional Psaltic Art in Greece, a valuable spiritual and cultural inheritance from Orthodox Byzantium. This phenomenal new growth and maturity in the field of Byzantine Musicology over the past few years has given birth to renewed study and attention to the Byzantine and post-Byzantine chant sources in the spheres of academic, cultural and even practical parish life.

The published Proceedings or *Praktika* of the First Pan-Hellenic Conference on the Psaltic Art is organized into

three parts by its chief editor, Lecturer at the Musicology Department of the University of Athens, Achilleus G. Chaldaïakes. The publication begins with the editor's Introductory Note presenting the Institute's organizational documentation, the list of over a hundred official representatives from the sixty participating Metropolitanates of the Church of Greece, the Conference Program and a selection of printed music from the hymns performed at the opening ceremony by the internationally-renowned Maestores of the Psaltic Art. Part I concludes with copies of the opening greetings, blessings and messages from the President of the University of Athens, Georgios Babiniotes, His All-Holiness Bartholomaios I, Patriarch of Constantinople, His Beatitude Christodoulos, Archbishop of Athens and All Greece, Fr. Gregorios for the Danielite Brotherhood of Mount Athos, and the President of the Federation of Hellenic Chanters Associations, Christos Chatzinikolaou.

Part II contains the five papers presented at the conference as well as Gr. Th. Stathis' welcoming remarks, thanks and initial address to the conference as the Institute's director. The first paper, Gr. Stathis' "An Historical Assessment of the Psaltic Art: Didacticism and Transmission," is a brief, tripartite outline of the history of the Psaltic Art. The paper begins with historical overviews of (1) the pre-notational and (2) the notational periods before turning to (3) a review of the ways chant was taught and transmitted in the past and in our own day beginning from the churches, monasteries and Patriarchal Schools, moving on to the various musicological and philological associations, conservatories and various organized efforts by Metropolitanates. Concluding with five of his own proposals Stathis feels would greatly enhance and further the education and training of chanters, of central importance is considered the raising of the dividing wall between the New Method of chant notation and the 'old method.'

In the next paper by Antonios E. Alygizakes, Professor of the University of Macedonia, "The Ekphonic Psaltic Praxis: the 'Chyma' and 'Ekphonos' Readings," after introducing this oldest form of Byzantine chant – the ekphonic' – Alygizakes proceeds to define and review the points at which these types of ancient chant are still used today in divine worship. He then analyzes the existing local traditions, comparing them with the research published to date, making a comparison with the extant historical recordings and published music scores containing such readings and liturgical exclamations. His notational and recorded examples (some extremely rare) include the following: Iakovos Naupliotes, Konstantinos Psachos, Ioannes Sakellarides, Gennadios Themelis, Simon Karas, J. B. Thibaut, Metropolitan Eirenaïos of Samos, Sp. Peristeres and the Archimandrite Germanos. Alygizakes discusses three general types of ekphonic performance. He traces the first type to the *Doxa soi, Kyrie, doxa soi* in enharmonic *nana* from *di* attributed to Petros Lampadariou, which he says represents the Patriarchal tradition. His analysis suggests that this first type utilizes simple, repeated phrases employing the baseis of *di* and *ano ni*, and making use of the chroa named *kliton*. Audio examples provided at the lecture included especially rare historic recordings by Iakovos Naupliotes the Protopsaltes of the Great Church of Christ (1931) and the Metropolitan of Samos Eirenaïos Papamichael. This first type of ekphonic performance, he adds, is still very pronounced at the Patriarchate, in Thessalonike and on Mount Athos. The second type, witnessed to in the music of Konstantinos Psachos, Gennadeios Themelis and Simon Karas, as well as some of the melodies in the publications of J. B. Thibaut and C. Höeg, tends toward a more melodic embellishment and makes use of a simplified or softened interval of the chroa *kliton*, indicating a more diatonic approach. A third type of ekphonic performance is represented by the so-called *leitourgika* in Mode II for the Divine Liturgy of Saint Basil the

Great (i.e. *Hagios, hagios, hagios, kyrios sabbaoth* and *Se hymnoumen*). After a short discussion on existing 'chyma' traditions a most useful list of forty historic and newer recordings containing such chants is offered. By far the most interesting point of his paper, however, is the proposal of an already semi-developed notational shorthand that would facilitate the proper recitation of such readings by marking the proper points where one would perform imperfect, perfect and final cadences. The list of over forty recordings with traditional ekphonic and ekphonic performances will be especially helpful to the new generation of young people learning the psaltic art in America, since the severe lack of trained teachers and nonexistence of schools to learn the chant creates a void not easily filled.

The third paper, "The Theoretical Study of the Psaltic Art: an Attempt at a Diachronic Approach," by Achilleus G. Chaldaïakes, is the presentation of part of an ongoing project he has begun attempting to coalesce the theory of the notational signs based on the so-called *Protheoria* of the *Papadike* music manuscripts of four Byzantine and four post-Byzantine theory treatises. His presentation even included the performance of a musical example found in Manuel Chrysaphes' treatise regarding the power of the phthorai. Chaldaïakes' paper brings out the continuity of development and practicality witnessed to in the theory manuscript tradition.

The fourth paper by Demetrios Giannelos, "The Published Chant Theories: Resulting Problems," examines post-1881 printed chant theory books of the New Method exploring the extent to which the revisions of the 1881 Music Committee<sup>2</sup> made their way into the practical chant and didactic traditions. His presentation is clear and centered on the theory behind the hyphesis and diesis signs, concluding how differences exist in the printed theory books as to how 'descriptive' or 'prescriptive' the New Method notation is. This, he suggests, leads to problems in terminology, theory transmission,

understanding and interpretation of the notation. Giannelos' paper is definitely a call for further systematic research in the field of practical, new and clearer chant theory books.

The final paper, so entertainingly presented by the Rev. Archimandrite Fr. Dositheos at the conference, Abbot of the Sacred Monastery Tatarnes, "The Teleturgic Dimension of the Psaltic Art: on Typikon Order" (*peri typikes eutaxias*), begins with the following premise:

Three things were preserved as the apple of the eye during the years of Turkish occupation: (1) the preciseness of the rubrics in the typika, (2) the love toward the ecclesiastical music and its chanters, and (3) the continuous connection with Constantinople and all that was chanted there.

Fr. Dositheos' presentation finely embroiders serious as well as entertaining (but sobering) quotations from published materials to illustrate his points; he touches on various related issues, from the importance of the social position of the chanters in Greek society, both positive and negative, to attitudes toward liturgical life and music. Some historical personalities utilized include Koraes, Roides and Papadiamantes. One of the most amusing points in his talk was his description of the (ab)use of microphones in some churches today as "divine retribution of the priests and chanters against the women who would sometimes converse in church as if at market!" The gist of Fr. Dositheos' argument, however, is well taken. He outlines how it wasn't until the modern Greeks gained their independence that they began tinkering with the liturgical life of the Church and its traditional chant, cutting up and cutting out services in their attempts to introduce harmonized melodies and even instruments. Influenced by a culture that was increasingly looking westward for inspiration and 'enlightenment,' he argues they began turning away from Orthodox piety and the fear of God that had successfully carried them through the centuries of Turkish occupation.



Part III of the publication under review begins with a summary by D. Balageorgios and Gr. Anastasiou, academic assistants at the Dept. of Musicology of the University of Athens, of all that transpired during the round table discussion whose theme was "Psaltic Praxis from the Side of Interpretation." The round table consisted of an impressive group of today's chanters and teachers: the Archon Protosaltes of the Great Church of Christ, Leonidas Asteres, the hagiote fathers, Gregorios hieromonachos and Daniel monachos of the Danielite Brotherhood on Mount Athos, the Protosaltes of the Church of Hagia Sophia in Thessalonike, Charilaos Taliadoros, the Protosaltes of the Church of St Eirene in Athens, Lykourgos Angelopoulos, the Protosaltes of the Church of St. Marina in Illisia and Lecturer at the University of Athens, Athanasios Bourles, the Protosaltes of the Monastery Blatodon, Thessalonike and Professor of the University of Macedonia and choirmaster of the Byzantine Choir of the University of Thessalonike, Antonios Alygizakes and the Professor of the Department of Musicology at the University of Athens, Director of the Institute of Byzantine Musicology and choirmaster of The Maestros of the Psaltic Art, Gr. Th. Stathis. Stathis' initial introduction on the interpretation and *exegesis* of the older and newer notations was followed by a short presentation by each of the panel members. Questions previously submitted by those in attendance were then addressed by the panel members; to say that the discussions were lively would be an understatement.

Finally, the "Chronology and Conclusions of the First Pan-Hellenic Conference: 'The Theoria and Praxis of the Psaltic Art'" is offered by Gr. Th. Stathis. In it he summarizes the events that took place and offers twelve conclusions which are too long to summarize here, but which touch upon all the subjects reflected in the presented papers and round table discussion. The central development they point to is the ap-

plication of practical psaltic issues to ongoing international musicological academic research. This in itself is quite an impressive direction. Lastly, the photographic addendum that follows contains fifteen images from the proceedings and the Conference's musical events.

Fr. Constantine Terss

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> The ekphonic notation is primarily found in notated manuscripts from the eighth through the twelfth centuries in the liturgical books of the Prophetologion, Praxapostolos and Evangelion. As a notational system it is regarded as having guided the recitation of such readings during the liturgical services. For further reading see: Thibaut 1913; Høeg, Wellesz et al. 1935; Wellesz 1949; Psachou and Chatzetheodorou 1978.

<sup>2</sup> Patriarcheiu 1888.

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*Psalate synetos toi Theoi (Sing ye praises with understanding [Ps. 47. 7])*. Recordings from the First Pan-Hellenic Conference: "Theoria and Praxis of the Psaltic Art" (Athens, 3-5 November 2000); audio compact disc and booklet.

Gregorios Stathis: *The Maestores on the Psaltic Art. Psalate synetos toi Theoi*. (Recorded at the First Pan-Hellenic Conference: "The Theoria and Praxis of the Psaltic Art"; Athens: 3-5 November 2000; Chronology – Conclusions and Chants). Athens: Institute of Byzantine Musicology of the Holy Synod of the Church of Greece, 2001. 52-page booklet containing texts, music and photos; 2 audio compact disks.

*Psalate synetos to Theo (Sing ye praises with understanding [Ps. 47. 7])*, consists of two audio compact discs containing excerpts of the musical events that were a vital part of the whole and that I have yet to touch upon.

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